

# In Scarlet & Silk

## Hunting & Steeplechasing

BY

FOX RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

FINCH MASON

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# IN SCARLET AND SILK

OR

## RECOLLECTIONS OF HUNTING AND STEEPLECHASE RIDING

BY

FOX RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "CROSS COUNTRY REMINISCENCES"

WITH TWO DRAWINGS IN COLOUR BY

FINCH MASON

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

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1896

*To* His Grace the Duke of BEAUFORT, K.G., *this Volume is, by permission, most respectfully dedicated, with the heartfelt admiration of his grateful servant*

THE AUTHOR

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# INTRODUCTORY

# INTRODUCTORY

THE desire to excel in one particular pursuit has always been so prominent a feature with sportsmen—each piously believing in his own particular hobby, and in his inmost heart believing not at all in the hobbies affected by his brother-men—that all attempts at cohesion on the part of the general body, and of fighting shoulder to shoulder for the sake of the common weal, have hitherto resulted in failure. Now, however, we have a Sporting League, and—we shall see what we shall see! But despite rivalry and jealousy; despite the efforts made by the noble army of Anti-gamblers, humbugs in general, and declaimers against that crowning iniquity (no joke intended here!) the Royal Buckhounds, Sport lives, and will continue to live, because there is deep down within the heart of every

Englishman a real and strongly-rooted love of it for its own sake. When, however, by means of the Rack, thumbscrews, Acts of Parliament, Police-court summonses, and other deadly weapons, the kill-joys of the world have finally succeeded in eliminating all such feelings from our breasts, surely then even the most sanguine and most patriotic amongst us must begin to look anxiously for the advent of the aboriginal gentleman from New Zealand whom Macaulay has forewarned us shall one day indulge in the cheap, though draughty, entertainment of sitting on the ruins of London Bridge.

But these nineteenth-century Aladdins will have to rub their lamps for a long time before they bring about the changes they are striving for, and cause themselves and their fellow-men to live the sort of Arcadia-and-water existence which they think the only fitting one; so taking advantage of the interval they are kind enough to allow us, between now and the time of our final annihilation in the world of sport, let us leave the discussion

of these "angels without wings," who are obviously too ethereal for this earth, and turn to the more congenial subject of good horses and good men, and make our way, in spirit, with them as they cross a country.

At that very moment I was just on the point of falling into the error I made allusion to in the first line of this chapter; *i.e.*, I was about to let the sportsman-jealousy run away with me, and launch into panegyrics upon my own particular manias, hunting and steeple-chasing, making comparisons—which we are told are always "odious"—with other branches of sport. But having now, metaphorically speaking, written out a warning and pasted it into my hat, I will endeavour, in these pages, to "put up a strong jockey" on my hobby-horse, and keep him from bolting into the crowd, and treading on the corns of any of my fellow-men whose sporting tastes take another form to my own.

I think I must have caught the horrible habit from Jorrocks. Do we not all remember how, with the best intentions in the world,

he never could avoid "running amuck" with racing and coursing men, stag-hunters, and what he contemptuously designated "muggers." All I will say is this: Is there anything on earth so good, so grand, so—well, you know what I mean!—as riding across country?

If I live to the age of Methuselah, I shall never forget my own first gallop over fences; and this was the "how" of it, as the Yankees say.

My grandfather—may the turf lie lightly over one of the best and hardest cross-country riders that ever lived—had just bought a very handsome chestnut cob, a half-broken four-year-old. One day he said to me—

"Come up into the meadow, and you can have a ride on the new cob."

My small heart glowed with delight. What promotion from the broken-winded pony! As Penley observes, "What glory!" Be it known that I was then of the mature age of seven.

A groom led up the four-year-old, looking as if butter wouldn't melt in its mouth. I

was hoisted up, and the moment his head was let go, away he went as if he had been fired out of a gun!

My grandfather shouted some directions to me, which I did not catch—whoever does hear directions under such circumstances? A small brush fence at the end of the meadow did not stop him; he jumped high at it, but I jumped a good deal higher even than he did, and was embracing his neck when we landed. The next field was bounded by a high wall, so that he could go no farther. With undiminished speed he raced round it, and gradually bore away back again towards the meadow we started the cruise in. Again he charged and topped the low fence; this time I seemed to be sitting on his ears. He went about twenty yards farther, and then stopped dead, and with great calmness and methodical precision kicked me off, after which he quietly commenced grazing.

I rose to my feet, and waited to receive my grandfather's sympathy as I screwed my knuckles into one eye. I waited, however,

in vain. Instead of sweet, die-away expressions of the "Never-mind-then-it-was-a-naughty-pony" order, stern, austere tones demanded to know—

"Who told you to come tumbling off like a flour-sack? Get up on to the pony immediately. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

His motto was "Men, not mollycoddles."

Nature, I think, intended me for a light-weight jockey; fate willed otherwise, and called me to the Bar. Between inclination and duty I have, at times, got into some curious and complex situations. For example, I remember that at a time when I was acting as Deputy-Judge at a certain Criminal Court of Record, I sat, on the Thursday, in all the glory of wig and gown, sentencing my fellow-men to various terms of imprisonment; the next day I was sporting silk in some Hunt Steeplechases. During that afternoon the "open ditch" proved fatal to me; and being rather knocked out of time, several people came up and assisted in jerking me on to my

feet again. The following day I was waiting for my train on the platform at Charing Cross, when a nondescript kind of individual sidled up to me, and with a sad sort of smile on his face, exclaimed—

"How de do, sir? Hope you're well. You don't seem to know me, but I know you well enough."

"The deuce you do," thought I to myself. And then I racked my brain to solve the problem of whether this was one of my rescuers at the fatal "ditch fence," or a witness I'd insulted in cross-examination, and who was now about to punch my head. I dared not say much for fear of "giving myself away." It would never do for a "Counsel learned in the law," still less for a Deputy-Judge, to confess to anything so frivolous as riding in silk. So I "laid low," saying nothing, but indulging in the safe investment of a smile.

"Last saw you, sir, in a very different place to this," he went on.

"He means a race-course," I thought, and then ventured to reply—

"Yes; rather a bigger crowd there, eh?"

"Bit of a 'turn-up' for me, sir, wasn't it?"

"Somebody for whom I've won a race; good business. Now I can speak freely," reflected I. Then aloud, I said—

"Very stupid of me that I can't quite remember your face. Always had a bad memory for faces. I think you said your name was——?"

"I didn't exactly say, sir; but it's Tupkins."

Tupkins. I was as much in the dark as before.

"Don't you remember the day, sir?" he went on in lugubrious tones.

"Oh—ah—well—not quite," I stammered. "Somebody for whom I've *lost* a race apparently," I added to myself, more mystified than ever.

"Don't you remember what you gave me that day, sir?"

"No—o. I—I can't say I do. What was it?"

"Three months—'ard.'"

I fled. It was a man I had tried and sen-

tenced at the Quarter-Sessions two years before.

During the years I was in practice, I was generally able to get away for the bi-weekly gallop with the Royal Artillery Draghounds at Woolwich. Handy to town, I could often stay in the Temple until half-past one o'clock, and then be in time for the run at three. What glorious fun we used to have! It has fallen to my lot to hunt with many packs, and in many countries, but there will be a soft spot in my heart for the memories of the good old Drag until the end of my life.

On several occasions I had to cut things rather fine in order thus to combine business with pleasure. Once, I remember that, led by Mr. Lumley Smith, Q.C. (now a County Court Judge), I was arguing a case before Lord Chief-Justice Coleridge, until nearly twelve o'clock, at the Royal Courts of Justice, and by dint of cabbing to Cannon Street Station, railing to Blackheath, there changing and cantering the remaining two miles to

Woolwich on a hack, I was enabled to be present at the inaugural luncheon of the season, by half-past one, at the Royal Artillery mess: rather sharp work. On another occasion I won a case at Bow County Court, attended a summons before the Judge at Chambers, and then arrived in time to get my gallop—and also a rattling fall over a piece of stiff timber—with the Drag. I also remember that one "Grand Military" day, when the Woolwich Drag, for the convenience of such of its followers as wished to go to Sandown, met at 8 A.M., I was enabled to ride the line with them, change horses, and jog on to Farningham, hunt with the Mid-Kent Staghounds, and then rail back to town in time to change and attend a consultation of counsel at 5.30 P.M. with the late Sir Henry Jackson, Q.C., in Lincoln's Inn.

Mention of Lincoln's Inn reminds me of the time I was a student there, in the chambers of that eccentric genius, Thomas Brett. A profound theoretical lawyer, and author of three or four most erudite legal

works, nothing pleased him so much as to get away to a race-course. He did not "throw much style" into his "get up." We started together once for a day at the old Croydon Steeplechases. Tom Brett's idea of a suitable costume for this and every other occasion was a tall hat, with the nap all brushed the wrong way, and stuck on hind side before; a thin black necktie, fastened in a bow, and slewed round under one ear; an overcoat left open and flying out to the breeze, as he sped along at a pace that no man on earth could keep up with, except at a trot; trousers of equal parts, grey cloth and ink spots; ink-spotted cuffs and collar; with *pince-nez* which never remained for five consecutive seconds on his nose. He was on these race days always armed with a quart bottle, the black neck of which protruded boldly from his side-pocket, and three or four cigars wrapped up in a bit of newspaper. He absolutely declined to go on a Stand, or even into an enclosure, and the way he raced from one fence to the other

to see horses jump was a sight for the gods! On every race he religiously punted half-a-crown, never more or less; and in all the years I knew him, I never remember his backing a winner but once. Poor Tom Brett had a heart of gold, but it was certainly hidden beneath a strange, uncouth exterior.

Why lawyers should be generally considered incapable of sympathy with sport, is passing strange; and how false the notion is, is easily shown by mentioning such names in connection with hunting and racing as those of the Lord Chief-Justice (Lord Russell); the late Mr. Granville Somerset, Q.C., one of the best men who ever crossed Exmoor; Sir Henry Hawkins; Lord Justice Lopes; Mr. Justice Grantham; Sir Frank Lockwood, Q.C., M.P., the late Solicitor-General; Mr. Butcher, M.P.; and Mr. Darling, Q.C., M.P.—all of whom, by the way, took great interest in the first Bench and Bar Point to Point race, run April 10, 1895. That so grave and learned a profession could do anything of such a decidedly "frisky" nature as indulge

in a steeplechase, took all the old-fashioned lawyers by surprise. Shades of Erskine, Mansfield, and Brougham! suppose any one had been rash enough to propose such a thing in their day! Excommunication would surely have been deemed too good for him. But "*autre temps, autre mœurs*," and an assemblage which included England's then Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor, and Sir R. Webster, the present Attorney-General, were at Combe to give the event a good "send off," and witness the success of Mr. Gee on Defiance in the Light Weight, and of the Hon. Alfred Lyttleton's Corunna (a Retreat horse), ably handled by Mr. H. Godsal, in the Heavy Weight contest. An unfortunate accident, at a wretched little fence with an awkward landing on a litter-covered road, brought three horses to grief, of which Mr. Smith-Bosanquet's Ladybird and Mr. Higgins's Cymbeline were both killed on the spot. At the same time and place Mr. Terrell, on Gaylad, who had made strong running during the early

part of the contest, swerved and knocked down Lord Justice Lopes, who was watching the race; whilst Mr. Croxall, riding Pepper, was also brought down in the *mêlée*. A splendid race home, between four, resulted, as I have said, in the victory of Corunna—bought by Mr. Lyttleton for sixty guineas, and entirely made into a jumper by him—Mr. Butcher, M.P., being second on Fingall, whilst Messrs. Cope and Terrell made a dead heat of it for third place.

Turn we now from law and the lawyers to the greatest and best of all cross-country work, the hunting of the fox.

# HUNTING

# FOX-HUNTING

## I

To speak of the early days of a comparatively modern sport like steeplechasing is, it will readily be seen, a very different matter from embarking on a description, however slight, of olden time hunting. "Lost in the mists of antiquity" is a phrase that would be no more true to apply to the beginning of the sport than "Lost in the mazes of perplexity," if applied to the seeker after such prehistoric knowledge. And, indeed, if it were intended to amplify the present small tome into a work of as many volumes as "Harry Hieover," of immortal memory, produced, there would still be insufficient space to give anything more than a mere glossary of the doings in a pastime of which Homer sang, and wherein Xenophon took part.

But, strangely enough, it would appear that our ancestors living before the time of Richard II. did not hunt the fox. Amongst the earliest of quarry, we find allusions to the bear, wolf, stag, boar, wild-cat, and hare, but the "little red-rover" was either left unmolested, or else, perhaps, regarded as merely unworthy vermin, to be despatched by trapping, or a knock on the head—when caught! Perhaps it was the difficulty of laying hands on him that first suggested the idea of calling in the aid of hounds for his destruction. Be that as it may, there is proof that the fox was looked upon as a "beaste of venerie" in this reign, and by the vast majority of men who hunt to-day would surely be accorded pride of place amongst them all.

Well may hunting be called a "Royal" sport, for from earliest ages a large proportion of our monarchs have followed hounds; and it is recorded of "Good Queen Bess" that she was still hunting when past her seventy-sixth year: a truly wonderful performance for any woman.

One of the Lords of Wilton has stated in his "Sports and Pursuits of the English," that hounds were never entered *solely* to fox until the year 1750; and the "Badminton" book on hunting tells us that the famous pack of the Dukes of Beaufort was only in 1762 "steadied from deer and encouraged to fox." Charles II. seems to have had a somewhat catholic taste in hunting countries, for there are records existing of his hunting in the West country at various places, in Essex and Middlesex; whilst my own grandfather lived within the country of the Crawley and Horsham Foxhounds in a little moated old house which was said to have been used exclusively as a hunting box by the Merry Monarch, from which place of abode I have sallied forth for many a good day's sport. Henry VIII. favoured Essex as well as the Windsor district; whilst "Good King George" appears to have affected the last-named locality chiefly, but also hunted on the South Downs. And coming down to the present day, it is pleasant indeed to reflect that

nearly all the members of the reigning house are well-known figures in the hunting field.

When we look back at our past hunting life, what difficulty we experience in determining which country we think is actually the best we have ever ridden over. I have never been fortunate enough to follow our premier pack, the Quorn—which, by the way, has in Lord Lonsdale, its present Master, one of the hardest and best men I ever saw cross a country—but in my own small experience I hardly know which to give the preference to. Sometimes I think the fine pastures and flying fences of the Grafton, or the Pytchley, or the eminently "jumpable" tract hunted by the Bicester; anon, that the Blackmoor Vale's big doubles, or Leighton or Aylesbury's galloping country, afforded me the most real pleasure. All were superlatively good in their several ways; and, of course, it depends so much upon how one was mounted as to the exact measure of enjoyment one extracted from the different

countries. Unhesitatingly, I say that I would rather hunt a donkey on the Thames Embankment than not hunt at all; but at the same time, I am equally sure that to obtain a *good* country it is worth taking any amount of extra trouble, rather than, by pursuing the *dolce far niente* method, to hunt in a bad one. And contrasting good and bad countries brings me to the consideration of a rather curious thing — the facility with which a horse, taken out of such countries as Kent and Surrey, for example, will adapt himself to even Northamptonshire in its most strongly fenced parts. A good horse simply loves hunting, and, ridden freely, will do his best to see where hounds are going, be the change in ground never so great. I have seen more than one instance of an animal which has been hunting in the worst parts of Kent, where, many a day, you never even see a fence worth calling a jump, transferred to the Grafton and the Pytchley country, facing boldly the big fences there, and with the

utmost success. Another queer transition case was that of a horse belonging to Mr. John White, of Taunton, which he sent up to me from the Devon and Somerset to hunt with the Blackmoor Vale. I never got on a bigger, bolder fencer, and in the Cheriton run of, I am afraid to say *how* many years ago, she carried me to the finish in a way I shall never forget, although she had not before this been outside Devonshire in her life. I had also a curious experience with a Welsh-bred horse, brought straight out of his native fastnesses into a flying country. Nothing would induce him to jump or even scramble through brush fences at first, but over a line of gates, or stiff timber of any sort, he could not be defeated. I hunted him for five seasons, and in that time rode over more gates than I have ever done before or since, and, save once, he never gave me a fall at any of them. As far as I could find out of his previous history—and as he came to me at a very early age he could not have had a lengthy one—the horse had had

hardly any previous experience of timber-jumping, but seemed to take to it quite naturally.

What an extraordinary combination of fortuitous circumstances is necessary for the making of a really fine run! Fox-hunting is so intrinsically good a sport that, year in, year out, it is well calculated to satisfy us all to the full; but how many—or rather, how few—first-rate runs do we get in a season? one might almost substitute the words "in a lifetime." Amongst the manifold requirements are a good scent, a good start, a good horse, and a good country. Let one of these be absent, and probably no good run will be recorded, as far as we, individually, are concerned. And can anything be more maddening than to find that your neighbour has had a good one, and that you yourself "got left." Yes, I know it sounds horribly selfish to say this, but can any poor, weak mortal deny that it is true? "Once upon a time," as the story-books say, I ventured forth upon a gay and corky four-year-

old to hunt the "red-rover." We were a long time before we found, during which period my mount persistently reared, and "made a beast of himself." At last a fox was found—a genuine "traveller." Away we went across a big meadow, with a nice brush fence at the far end, over which my young 'un bounded like a stag. I secretly hugged myself on being "in for a good thing."

I was—but not quite in the way I had anticipated.

We crossed a fallow field, bounded by a post and rails, about three feet six high. My haughty Pegasus, doubtless disdaining so unimportant an obstacle as this, tried to run through them. Result: Chaos!

. . . . .

We picked ourselves up, and resumed. Taught, doubtless, by this incident "not to despise your enemy," the four-year-old jumped the next ditch as though it were a navigable river; then sailed away at such a pace that we rapidly overhauled the leading brigade again. Just as I had (involuntarily,

for I could not hold the little brute!) attained the proud position of leading the —— field (it was over one of the best parts of Northamptonshire), hounds ran down to, and crossed, some jumping, some swimming, a biggish brook. Pulling and fighting for his head the young 'un went to his fate, and the pace felt like forty miles an hour! Up to within a length we got, and then, too late, he tried to "put on the brake"; found it impracticable to stop, and finally soused in, tail over head!

By the time we had finished our tug-of-war, he in the water and I on the opposite bank, a few bobbing black coats and one red one disappearing over the brow of the opposite hill were all the traces left of the field.

Rochefoucauld says, "Philosophy triumphs over future and past ills; but present ills triumph over philosophy," and at that juncture I must confess that the thermometer of my philosophy was below freezing-point.

We were nine miles from everywhere. The erstwhile corky four-year-old had not only had the steam taken out of him, but was

also slightly lame behind. Nothing for it but to walk back to B——. How I hate walking! and walking in top-boots, which surely, though unostentatiously, chafes away all the skin from your heels, is doubly horrible. I shall never forget that melancholy tramp, driving the now thoroughly dejected young 'un in front of me as I went. Then it came on to rain! There was only one thing needed to complete my woe. I did not have to wait long for it.

Two miles from B—— I was overtaken by a splashed and ridiculously happy looking man in pink.

"Halloa, old chap, you do look a picture. *We've had the very best gallop of the whole season!*" he exclaimed.

I knew it. I was as certain that when my chance was settled they would have the "best gallop of the season" as I was of death and quarter day!

"It keeps one young!" said one of the "Grand Old Men" of the chase to me a short time since, and his words, verily, are

borne out to the letter every day. What a list we might make of those we have seen "going" at a time of life when, but for the rejuvenating properties of hunting, men would have preferred the comfort of their easy chairs at home. It was but last year that I was talking to the Rev. Mr. Fane, whilst the Essex hounds were breaking up a fox after a sharp hour's gallop. Mr. Fane was then eighty-three, and always managed, somehow or other, to see most part of a run; and Lord Macclesfield, who hunted the South Oxfordshire for thirty years, was carrying his eighty summers bravely at the Peterboro' Foxhound Show this very year. Handsome old Mr. Digby, too, in the Blackmoor Vale country—what a delightful thing it was to watch him make his way along, to such good purpose that he got plenty of enjoyment out of his day. Captain Philpott, R.N., also in that country, I have seen following hounds at a very advanced age. And, to my mind, far more wonderful still, there is a lady now hunting—as I give her age my readers will,

I am sure, readily understand that unless I were prepared to immediately emigrate I dare not mention her name!—who is seventy-five, and the year before last broke her thigh riding over a fence. It must have required pretty good nerve to have braved the perils of the chase after that, at her age, and she is hunting this season in one of the home counties.

Mr. Robert Bird was another wonderful example of "keeping young." He used to go right well, not merely potter along, in the Fitzwilliam country—which takes some doing, by the way—until he was past eighty; and I see that Custance, in his interesting "Riding Recollections," states that this good sportsman offered to run any horse in the Fitzwilliam Hunt for £50, 12 st. 7 lbs. each, *owners up*, the challenger being then of the age of seventy-eight! And is it not matter of history, engraved in every fox-hunter's heart, how the immortal "Squire of Tedworth," Thomas Assheton Smith, "the best and hardest rider England ever saw," accord-

ing to Nimrod, was not only hunting, but going hard to hounds, and taking falls, until he was eighty years of age. Until the very last he rode up to his own gallant advice to others, "Throw your heart over; your horse will follow." And I cannot refrain from mentioning an incident wonderfully characteristic of that "not-to-be-denied" spirit in which he always rode across country. It was whilst he was hunting in Leicestershire, and the line taken by the fox was so severe, and the pace so hot, that, after going for about twenty minutes, he found himself accompanied by only one man, Mr. White. They came to a fence so big that there only seemed one practicable place in it. Mr. White was first at it, and when the Squire came up he found his friend stuck fast in it. "Get on!" roared Mr. Smith; "pray get out of the way!" "If you're in such a hurry, why don't you charge me?" was the reply. No sooner said than done, and Mr. Smith knocked horse and rider clean into the next field, and away they both went again in hot pursuit of the pack.

Few men have taken more falls, and got off more cheaply from them, than the hard squire. "There's no place you can't get over with a fall," he used to say, and he never let go of the reins when he was down; a most excellent plan, but attended with a certain amount of risk. In trying to follow this great horseman's advice, I nearly lost my left eye some years ago, as the hand that should have been guarding my face was employed in holding my reins; the consequence being that the four-year-old on top of me struck out, and cut my cheek down to the bone, exposing the eye in a most unpleasant manner.

There are few more striking figures in the hunting-field of to-day than that of Charles Shepherd, huntsman to Lord Leconfield, in the Sussex country. At the age of seventy-six, and probably senior by several years to any other of his craft in England, he still goes right well across a country, and is always with his hounds. He began hunting at the age of thirteen with Mr. Hall, of

Holbrook, Somerset, and was for six years under the huntsman there, James Treadwell. He early acquired such a reputation as a whip that, in the words of a famous hunting parson, the Rev. Mr. Blackbourne—now an octogenarian—he was so good that he "could whip hounds into your pocket." From there Shepherd went for two seasons to Lord Yarborough as second whip, under Tom Smith. Then Mr. Conyers, of Copthall, near Epping, offered him the place of first whip, and with him he remained for nearly seven years. Yorkshire and Lord Middleton next obtained his services as first whip, but a record of twenty-one blank days drove so keen a man as Shepherd from the country after the one season.* This was probably a lucky accident for him, as Mr. Scratton, of the Essex Union, then offered him his first place as huntsman, and it was in this country that he enjoyed what he always considers was the finest run of his life. On this particular day Shepherd found his fox just by the

* This country now has an abundance of foxes.

Chelmsford race-course, on Galleywood Common. They ran him through Hunt's Woods, past Stock, and right away over a fine line of country to the sea, killing him in a churchyard. The time was an hour and fifty minutes, and the distance covered must have been considerably over twenty-five miles. For over thirty years past Charles Shepherd has been with Lord Leconfield's pack, first taking the post of huntsman there under the Mastership of the present earl's father. He is never in bed after 5 A.M., winter or summer, and in the warm weather is out with his hounds in the park by half-past four. He has always been *facile princeps* at his profession; and even at his present age one might look a long time before finding any one to beat him. Truly "it keeps one young."

Although it is said that huntsmen are "born, not made," the saying is only true in a very limited sense. There is much to learn even by the heaven-born genius, and it is only reasonable to suppose that no one

has so good a chance of picking up the widely diversified acquirements of a thoroughly good huntsman as a whipper-in. This berth, of course, is the regulation "school" for recruits to the huntsmen ranks. But when the aspiring amateur wishes to hunt a pack, there is nothing like physicking himself, so to speak, with a mixture consisting of three parts watchful experience to one of written advice.

To a man who is naturally a lover of hounds, few sights are prettier than a clever "draw" up wind for a fox. Some men, thoroughly efficient in other respects, are apt to hurry this part of the business in their anxiety to get away for a gallop. But it is a bad fault. You may draw over a fox, and very soon get yourself a name as a bad finder of foxes. Besides which it unsettles hounds, and they grow careless and slack. As a rule, in open ground you will draw up wind—or it may sometimes be found advisable to draw with the wind slightly "abeam" of you. A fox is often to be found in withy osier beds, or curled up on a sunny

bank, asleep, after his nocturnal perambulations. Naturally, if you are drawing down wind, instead of up, you serve him with too long a notice to quit. This remark, however, does not apply to the average small covert, which should always be drawn *down* wind, or hounds will have a great chance of chopping him, a most undesirable thing. In "Extracts from the Diary of a Huntsman," written by the celebrated "Tom" (not Thomas Assheton) Smith, Master of the Craven, and afterwards of the Pytchley, and published fifty or sixty years ago, occurs this passage: "It is no uncommon thing for a good fox, on his being first found, to go up wind for a mile or two, and then head down wind, and never turn again; probably instinct tells them that hounds will go such a pace up wind that they will be a little blown, and that the change of scent, down wind, creates a slight check, which gives him the advantage," and this is a thing we should all try to remember in hunting hounds.

In big woodland countries plenty of voice and horn are essential on the huntsman's part, especially the former, when drawing the coverts, and no part of them that is at all "get-atable" should be passed over. No creature in the world understands the art of "lying low" better than a fox. Although you may well "kick up a row" until your fox is away and hounds after him, there is nothing to be gained by noise when once clear of covert and settled to the line. Then you may afford to be happy until you check—unless, *mirabile dictu!* you kill him instead. But in most cases you do get a check, or, to speak more correctly, a good many checks. Again, the field depend upon the huntsman's patience, discretion, and skill. His patience should restrain him from undue interference; hounds must always be allowed to try and recover the scent for themselves first. If they cannot do so, then the skill of the huntsman is seen to the greater advantage. Perhaps the fox has been headed and turned; perhaps chased by a cur; per-

haps—and this is one of the most curious things in hunting, as all practical men know—the scent has lifted from the ground, and is then floating in the air above hounds' heads, only to rest again on the ground a few minutes later. Having satisfied himself that his assistance is essential in recovering the scent, the huntsman must now get hold of his hounds and make his cast. And here he should remember that of the many things which may have headed his fox, a flock of sheep is *not* likely to have done the mischief. I have many times found the tracks of foxes in the snow going right through a lot of sheep. Of course they can do an infinity of mischief in the way of foiling a scent, but I am perfectly confident that a fox, hunted or otherwise, would never condescend to go out of his way for the sake of a flock of sheep. If your fox has been chased by a cur it is a bad business, for scent ceases, as from the scene of the incident. Shepherds' dogs are a terrible nuisance in this respect, and do nine-tenths of the work of spoiling sport.

It is obviously a most desirable thing that the huntsman should be as much as possible with his hounds during a run; one great reason for it being that he will then be able to see for himself, in the event of a check, *what* it is that has turned them—they can't tell him when he comes up ten minutes afterwards.

Probably no living creature thoroughly understands that great mystery Scent, except the fox himself; and this knowledge he shows at every point of the game; never more so than when dead beat and unable to trust any longer to his speed and stamina for safety. When, in addition to this, it is remembered that, in his own country, there is probably not an inch of it unfamiliar to him, that he can swim like an eel, is as fast as a race-horse, and as cunning as a member of the Anti-Gambling League; when, I say, we consider all this, it will be readily conceded that huntsman and hounds must "get up very early in the morning" to circumvent him!

A word as to over-riding; every year seems to make things worse in this respect. How *can* men tear right along when hounds are at fault, and do, in thirty seconds, such harm as means diminished or total lack of sport for the rest of the day? It is simply disgusting to see the extent to which this is carried. And when the offenders are reproved, we are treated, forsooth! to a lot of bunkum about their "coming out to please themselves!" The fact that they spoil every one else's fun of course goes for nothing with this class of cock-tail "sportsman." Unfortunately, many of the culprits are big subscribers, and the Master dare not give utterance to the thoughts that must necessarily be uppermost in his mind. *Apropos* of this, a well-known M. F. H., who had been sorely tried in this respect, caught his second whipper-in in a slight transgression of the same nature, and roundly swore at him before the whole field, winding up with, "At all events, I may d—n *you!*"

# FOX-HUNTING

## II

Time was when Essex, though always a sporting country, was rather looked upon as a hunting ground to be avoided, on account of its wealth of "plough" and circumscribed area of grass land. But during the last ten or fifteen years there has been a general move amongst Essex farmers to lay more and more of their land for grass, whilst, as draining is synonymous with high-class cultivation, the ground rides lighter and better than it did in the days of yore. Steam ploughing, the Powers be praised! is not much in evidence, and in the Roothings the "plough" is almost as good-going as the grass. The Essex Foxhounds, having their kennels at Harlow, run over an extremely

fine sporting country, and the establishment is one of which Mr. Bowlby and Mr. Loftus Arkwright, the joint masters, may well feel proud. No more efficient huntsman than Baily, who has carried the horn for several seasons here, could be found, and he and his whips are always thoroughly well mounted. Personally, I may say that I was under a strangely false impression when fate first took me into this country, for I thought that it was a singularly easy one to ride over. Viewing the matter in the light of actual experience, I at once confess my mistake. I am not saying that it admits of any comparison with really "big" countries, such as, for instances, the Blackmoor Vale, Grafton, or Pytchley, but, nevertheless, to be carried across Essex you must be on a performer: that admits of "no possible doubt whatever." The ditches are both big and deep; many of them have rotten banks into the bargain, but this last remark does not apply to the Roothings.

The Essex Union country is rather a smaller one to jump, and lies on the east

side of the main road from London to Colchester. Mr. Ashton, in his one season's Mastership (1894–5), deserves the thanks of followers of the pack for the great improvement he effected in it; but his constant preference of the *fortiter in re* to the *suaviter in modo* in dealing with the conduct of affairs in the field was hardly calculated to make him popular, and he is now replaced by Colonel Hornby, who gives up the Devon and Somerset in order to take over this pack, which obtains in him such a Master as it has not known for some time past. Although, at the time of writing, he has not yet been seen in pink over the ditches, his conduct of the famous west-country hounds puts it beyond all doubt that he will be an unequivocal success in his new position. Not only the gallant Colonel himself, but five of his children go, and go well, to hounds.

Talking of keeping a "field" in order, I always think that no man in the world ever fathomed the great mystery better than Lord Penrhyn. One never saw any unruliness in

the Grafton country, and, speaking for myself, I never heard the noble Master use even a sharp expression. He was invariably courteous to all—but no one ever thought of disobeying him.

Mr. Sheffield Neave's Staghounds go, about three days a fortnight, over much the same country as the Essex Foxhounds, and though the pack is hardly an ornamental one, they have shown good sport for many seasons past. Mr. Brindle now whips in to them, *vice* Mr. Edward Neave resigned, whilst the Master most ably carries the horn *in propriâ personâ*.

It was in the Essex country that Major Foster met with his fatal accident several seasons back. His horse refused, and then fell with him, at a deep ditch. Some time elapsed before the animal could be got off his prostrate rider, and then it was found that, unhappily, the pommel of the saddle had pressed him down, and literally choked him.

I commenced this chapter by saying that Essex was always a sporting country. This

year the farmers are keeping up its character, for when, in their interests, it was proposed to devote the funds usually expended upon Harlow Steeplechases to a big champagne luncheon, no less than three hundred of the sturdy agriculturists rose up in revolt, and appended their signatures to a request which signified that, although champagne might be good, sport was better! and Harlow Steeplechases were duly held. I never saw so big a gathering at a country race-meeting before.

During the past season foxes must have had a comparatively good time in their immunity from hounds, though, amongst others, Mr. Ashton, on four occasions, brought out his pack for a day's hunting on the snow. But in spite of the severity of the winter —one that will be remembered as stopping hunting for a longer period than any experienced since the "Crimean" year, 1857— cubs have been discovered in this country —Essex—very early. One litter that came under my notice, in especial, seems to be worthy of remark. Ferreting a bank on

the 29th of January, the ferret got into a fox-earth, and paid the penalty with his life. Then, seizing up one cub, the vixen made a bolt with it, leaving another behind her which, on examination, appeared to be about three weeks old. One or two other early litters have also been discovered, but none, that I have heard of, quite so soon in the year as this.

The ruthless builder is slowly, but none the less surely, exterminating foxes and fox-hunting in Kent and Surrey, and, alas! also in many parts of Sussex where I have enjoyed many a good gallop, notably with the Crawley and Horsham Foxhounds. Here, as a boy, I obtained (and deserved) the undying hatred of everybody in the field by riding a horse I could no more hold than I could have stopped a steam-roller. But good old George Loader — a better huntsman never lived — always refrained from using "cuss-words" at me, and said he "liked to see the young 'uns going." With only about seven stone on his back, the old steeplechase

horse I rode used to go as if the devil had kicked him.

In connection with Sussex hunting, it is sorrowful news that after keeping the Goodwood hounds for twelve years, the Duke of Richmond is now giving them up.

The best part of Kent, to my mind, is the country over which the Mid-Kent Staghounds travel. Round Maidstone and Wateringbury, indeed, there are some really fine lines to be traversed, with plenty of grass and good fencing. After manifold chops and changes of Mastership, this pack has now reverted to the Leney family, and in their hands I trust it may long remain. It is now several years since I had the pleasure of a run with them, but, with luck, I shall hope to renew their acquaintance ere long.

The West Kent Foxhounds hunt over a very varied country, good, bad, and indifferent. The Hon. Ralph Nevill, who presided over the destinies of this pack for so many years, has now resigned, to the great regret of all, but Bollen still remains to hunt them.

A fine horseman, with nerves of iron, he is a thorough master of his craft. I shall not readily forget his performance one day, some ten years back, when hounds had just streamed across the metals of the South-Eastern Railway. Bollen trotted up to some high and new post-and-rails, jumped them, on to the line, and crossing it, faced and overcame in like manner another obstacle of the same sort, the other side; and not one of us would follow him!

In the days when, by bringing any wretch out of a training stable to see hounds half-a-dozen times, you could qualify it to take part in "Hunter's" (save the mark!) flat races, the Old Surrey and other Surrey packs were always favoured with a plentiful supply of smooth-snaffled, martingaled, and bandaged "rips," ridden by big-headed and prematurely old-looking boys, who artfully lay in wait for the Master, and after rushing their mounts over or through a gap or two, would ask him for their "certificate." And, only too thankful to be rid of them, the much-worried

Master would probably say, "Yes" — and other things as well!

The resignation of Lord Chesham as Master of the Bicester, was a matter for real sorrow amongst hunting men. As a splendid type of an Englishman, both in mind and body, he would be (as he is in riding to hounds) "hard to beat." An extraordinary number of "the right sort" may always be seen following this pack and the Duke of Grafton's, included amongst them being such well-known personages in the hunting world as Sir Rainald (or is it "Lord" now?) Knightley and Lady Knightley, Lord and Lady Lawrence, Lord Capel, Lord Bentinck, Hon. Douglas Pennant, Baron de Tuyll, Earl of Ellesmere, Messrs. Lambton, George Drake, Grazebrooke, Campbell, Harrison, Mr. Walter and Lady D. Long, Hon. R. Grosvenor, Messrs. Fuller, Peareth, and last, but by no means least, Captain Edward Pennell Elmhirst ("Brooksby" of *The Field*). Many more there be, but, alas! treacherous memory deserts me, and I must pass on.

In these busy times, when the vast majority of men are engaged in some occupation requiring constant attendance in London, it may not be out of place to indicate a few of the countries which can be conveniently reached from there on the hunting morning. Between the pleasure of hunting from home and hunting from London, I think there can be hardly any comparison drawn. We should all like to hunt from home; but, unfortunately, we don't all get what we like in this bad world, and if we can't hunt from home, many can snatch a day's enjoyment here and there by using the iron horse as a covert hack.

The Queen's Staghounds, Lord Rothschild's, and the Mid-Kent are all the more easily accessible on account of the later hour at which they meet—11.30 and 12 o'clock respectively—and may well be reached without the awful ordeal of "getting up in the middle of the night." The Essex Staghounds, which go three days a fortnight, mostly over the Roothings, and the Warnham, in the Crawley

and Horsham country, can also be met without much trouble. Or if foxhounds are preferred, the Crawley and Horsham, the West Kent, the Essex, the Essex Union, the Old Surrey, and the Surrey Union all lie handy. Of course, if soaring ambition takes you in her toils, and nothing short of the "crack" packs will satisfy your yearnings, you can reach the Grafton, the Bicester, or even get to Rugby and Harboro' by leaving London at a somewhat "pallid and ghastly" hour. If you *do*, all I hope is that you will be more fortunate in your initial effort than was a plucky friend of mine, some time back, who danced all night at the Artillery ball at Woolwich, got back to his quarters at 4 A.M., started an hour later for London, and caught the 7.30 from Euston to Rugby. Here he and a brother "gunner" got their hunters and spent the whole of the day trotting up and down lanes in a thick fog, and returned that night to town without ever having seen hounds at all!

The Old Berkely, Mr. Garth's, the Burstow,

and Hertfordshire, are good packs for the Londoner in point of distance; but of all those mentioned above, undoubtedly the best country is that over which Lord Rothschild holds sway. Leighton or Aylesbury will be found most convenient for hunting with this excellent pack, whilst the Mid-Kent trysts are mostly within reach of Maidstone—the kennels are at Wateringbury, close to that town—or Tonbridge. Mr. Sheffield Neave's (the Essex Stag) kennels are at Ingatestone, and his pack is equally well met from Chelmsford or Ongar. Billericay, Ingatestone, and Chelmsford are handy stations for the Essex Union, whilst the Essex (Fox) country lies more adjacent to Harlow (kennels) and Ongar. Horsham, Crawley, and Steyning, give facilities both for the Warnham Stag- and Crawley and Horsham Fox-hounds, and the West Kent may be met from Farningham and Penshurst —the latter is by far the better country, but with a train service which does not always accommodate the metropolitan Nimrod.

And now a word or two as to the class

of country met with whilst following these packs. With Lord Rothschild's, the glorious Vale of Aylesbury lies stretched before you; all grass, practically; fair fences, with not a few brooks. You want a jumper here, and a galloper as well; but it is by no means a very big country. Compared with parts of Northamptonshire, or with the average tract galloped over by, say, the Blackmoor Vale or Cattestock, it is an easy one to ride over; and certainly I know none more pleasant. The Queen's varies very much indeed. Some parts are first-rate, and others—well, are not! The Mid-Kent get some beautiful pieces of jumping and galloping ground in the vicinity of Maidstone and Wateringbury, but on the Farningham side it is not at all good. In the former part plenty of grass and flying fences; in the latter, flint stones, cold clay, and sticky fallow; while the immense woodlands make things even worse for the West Kent Fox-hounds than they are for the more artificial sport of stag-hunting. With the Crawley and Horsham Fox, and the Warnham Stag, a most

excellent sporting country can be ridden over, though there is lots of plough, and you must take the rough with the smooth. Mr. Garth's and the Old Berkely I have never hunted with. It must be confessed that the Surrey packs, and also the West Kent, have a bad country as a whole. Many is the day I have spent with them, toiling over flint stones and clay fallows, climbing hills like the side of a house, and threading almost interminable woodlands, in return for the very minimum of sport. Fruit-growing and wire also seriously militate against hunting here.

But as I said before, the West Kent get their compensation when they meet in the Penshurst country. The East Kent is an awful tract, except just in a very few parts. I have treated of the Essex district in the early portion of this chapter, and the two foxhound packs, the Essex and Essex Union, are turned out and hunted in really smart fashion. To those who like a ditch country—perhaps it is rather an acquired taste—nothing better could be recommended

than to try your luck here. But I would remind all "birds of passage" that the Essex does not advertise, and expects the trifle of a thirty guineas' subscription from those outside its boundaries. In fact, of all the packs we have just been dealing with as easily accessible from the Metropolis, only two—the Queen's and Lord Rothschild's—are non-subscription ones.

I should never advise a man to keep his hunters in London. The eternal bother and ever-present risk of the boxing to and from the scene of action on hunting days, and the almost impossibility of properly exercising horses in town, are drawbacks so great, as to more than counterbalance the admitted advantage of keeping them (and your groom) under your own eye.

But if this plan is adopted, always see that your man starts in plenty of time for the departure platform, for a slip upon the greasy paving may be the result of an extra sharp trot to catch his train. And after hunting is over, don't ride straight off to the

railway station and put your horse in his box; attend to his wants first. He should always be put into some stable, if possible, wisped over, and given either a pail of oatmeal gruel, or a light feed, preceded by a little chilled water. If oatmeal is not to be had, a double handful of common flour will serve the purpose. Then, being warm and comfortable, he will not be so likely to take harm on the return journey as he would when boxed home straight away.

As to the system of hiring hunters, I think if a man is still young, blessed with good nerves, and can "take a toss" with equanimity, that he might do far worse than adopt this plan. I have very pleasant memories of the "jobbed" hunter, and I don't know that the average "hireling" has put me down oftener than my own horses have done. I am quite aware, however, that this is not an universal experience. Out of many hired ones I have ridden, and over all sorts of countries, I can only remember getting one serious fall, and badly injuring one

horse. That injury, however, was a fatal one: he pitched on to the point of his shoulder in landing over a drop fence, and although I was able to walk him home, he never came out again. In hiring, too, there is one material advantage to a poor man; he knows the extent of his loss when "grief" results.

If you can hunt from home, however, I am quite sure that the poor man's "best value" is to buy something cheap. "There are as many good cheap ones as good dear ones," an old farmer used to say to me; and speaking as one who never had much more money than he knew what to do with, I can add that I have always been able, with, of course, a certain amount of trouble, to get cheap hunters—and they haven't all been bad ones either!

Through the kindness of friends I have had many a fine day on three and four hundred guinea hunters, and am profoundly thankful to say, never had any bad luck with one of them. Once, however, when mounted

by a dear old friend of mine, the horse fell down dead with me. A *post-mortem* revealed the fact that fatty degeneration of the heart existed, and although, no doubt, the sharp gallop we had just had, and the exertion of jumping fences, did not improve matters, still the horse might well have died even had he been standing in his stable at the time.

Taken on the whole, I think I feel happier when riding over fences on horses that don't cost any money! There is such a glorious feeling of irresponsibility about the thing then.

Without exception, the very fastest hunter I ever owned was a half-worn-out steeplechase horse, which I bought for fifteen sovereigns. He was fired all round and "dicky" in front; but there seemed to be nothing he would turn his head from, and it never gave him any trouble to gallop down every other horse in the field. He was a very hard puller, and gave me one nasty fall, simply because I could not hold him.

Every hunting man probably remembers,

with fondness, his two or three best runs. The two most enjoyable ones I ever had were in no single respect alike, and yet I must bracket them together. One was a very fast twenty-five minutes with the Grafton, over as fine a country as even Northamptonshire can boast of. I was riding a five-year-old, a recent purchase; and when one's "latest" carries you well, is not the enjoyment always doubled? We simply raced all the way, and finally saw the fox rolled over in the open, under our horses' noses. The other run, which I love to look back upon, was a grand gallop of nearly two hours in the Blackmoor Vale. This, also, was very fast for an hour and a half, or a little more, perhaps: from then, our fox gradually ran us out of scent, and we finally lost him. It was quite a select few which got through that gallop, and the way our beaten horses "chanced" their last three or four fences, has since given me food for reflection. One of the "survivors" (I think it was Captain Luttrell) came down a crumpler at the very

last fence we jumped, but got off cheaply, as luck would have it. Mr. Merthyr Guest, I remember, was right in front during the whole, or nearly the whole, of the run. A truly wonderful man, the Master of the Blackmoor Vale: surely he must share with the Marquis of Worcester the distinction of hunting more than any man in the kingdom.

Six days a week is, I believe, the Marquis of Worcester's ordinary allowance, and he is undoubtedly one of the finest amateur huntsmen in the world; and to hunt a big country like the Duke of Beaufort's is no small tax upon a man's physical powers, to say nothing of his skill.

Hunting, and indeed all high-class English sport, has had no better friend, no more splendid patron, than the Duke of Beaufort, and as a huntsman he is unsurpassed. In every way he has set a grand example for true sportsmen to follow, whilst among his neighbours and tenantry he is simply worshipped. No finer type of an English nobleman—in every sense of the word—ever

lived than the present Lord of Badminton, and the turf has sustained a great loss indeed by his retirement. His Grace, however, still takes a lively interest in racing, and is a regular attendant at covert-side. For a man who, this year (1895), has celebrated his golden wedding, the way in which he slips over his own stone-wall country is marvellous, and would puzzle most men of half his age to imitate. Although the blue and white jacket will be sorely missed on the race-course, the blue and buff livery will still be to the fore at covert-side. May it be so for many a year to come, and the best of good luck go with it!

In the class of amateur huntsmen, Lord Willoughby de Broke takes high rank, and to his undoubted skill he, like Lord Worcester, adds the invaluable quality of being a grand horseman. Mr. Fellowes, whom I have had the pleasure of following with the Shotesham, in Norfolk, always struck me as a beautiful huntsman, and, at a very advanced age, got over a by no means small country in a

surprising manner. "What a quartette of grand sportsmen!" must be the thought of all hunting men when the names of the Duke of Beaufort, Mr. George Lane Fox of the Bramham Moor, the ever-to-be revered "Parson" Jack Russell, and Mr. Fellowes are mentioned.

I suppose it would be a safe thing to say that a hound is at his best in his third season, that is, when he is about four years old; but it by no means follows that he will not be as good, with ordinary luck, when he is six. The first failing usually noticeable about a hound that is "getting on in years" is that his turn of speed fails him. If he has been a leading hound, he will now, perhaps, drop back into the ruck in running, especially if the pace be very good; soon after he will begin to tail, and must be drafted. A constant supply of puppies must be had recourse to to supply the places of the worn out; and it is always, of course, necessary to breed many more than you are likely to want, so that only the best may be retained at the close of the cub-

hunting season. Probably not much more than half the entry will be worth keeping; which is not to be wondered at when one considers the manifold qualities required in order to produce a first-rate hound — nose, speed, stamina, good looks; all should be there. Well might the breeding of fox-hounds be regarded as a separate and distinct profession, so great is the demand upon a man's knowledge, experience, and skill, so onerous the task of producing a truly good hound. "Like produces like" in many cases, as we know; but in hound-breeding, perhaps more than in anything else, nature oft-times seems to take a pleasure in defying and setting at naught all the "well-laid schemes of men and mice." It has been well said that to get a perfect pack means fifty years of work.

A somewhat curious custom, but one which has been attended with success, is that of cub-hunting in the evening instead of at early dawn. The present and the late Lords Yarborough have, *inter alia*, practised this

system, and I have often thought that instead of meeting at 11 or 12 o'clock at the end of the regular hunting season, when the days are drawing out and evenings are fairly light, that a much later hour for the tryst would produce far better sport. Towards Easter time the ground is frequently as dry as a turnpike road, and we often find that hounds only begin to run just as we are leaving off and going home.

# STAGHOUNDS

It would hardly be using the language of exaggeration to say that for one man who has crossed Exmoor in pursuit of the wild red deer, at least a thousand are familiar with the chase of the animal who is driven up to the meet, and when the fun is over returns to his home in his own carriage "like a gentleman," as a well-known sporting writer once put it. But if we wish for the poetry of the chase, if we would conjure up visions of Dian fair, of Hippolyta in *Midsummer Night's Dream* when speaking of the "hounds of Sparta," these words:

> "Never did I hear
> Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
> The skies, the fountains, every region near
> Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
> So musical a discord, such sweet thunder"—

then we must hie us to the West—substituting,

alack and alas, in these prosaic times, the Great Western Railway for the winged heels of Mercury — and, by the borders of the Severn sea, pursue the timid hind or her antlered lord across the heather and the moor.

That the beauty of the scene has much to do with the charm of the sport here, goes without saying. The lovely Devonshire coombes, the vales of Somerset, the magnificent moorland, with its wealth of purple heather, the wild beauty of the Quantocks, and the picturesque "setting" of the Bristol Channel, cannot fail to inspire the naturalist side of us with joy, even at the moment that the "sportsman half" is looking askance at the terrible roughness of the country that must be ridden over in order to see anything of the chase itself. The rocky ground, the uncompromising hills, the long distances to be covered, and, withal, the pace that will enable you to be "in front," must all be borne in mind when selecting a horse for this work. He must be thoroughly stout and clever, have feet as hard as the nether

millstone; he must be able to go a great pace, be short coupled, and possess undeniable shoulders. With such a nag under him, a man may "harden his heart," and prepare for certainly a long, probably a good, day's sport.

When the fortunes of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds were at a very low ebb, Mr. Fenwick Bisset stepped into the breach, and in spite of difficulties which would have deterred many another man, he held the Mastership, with infinite credit to himself and benefit to the country, for no less than twenty-seven years. Old Jack Babbage, who had been huntsman to Mr. Carew, was appointed to carry the horn when Mr. Bisset assumed the command, and Arthur Heal was whipper-in. Good as Babbage was, it seems to be generally admitted that Arthur Heal was better, when, in due course, he became huntsman to the famous pack; and it takes a clever man to do himself and his employers justice in this position; a much more trying one, I venture to think, than that of hunts-

man to an ordinary provincial pack of stag- or fox-hounds. The natural difficulties of the country could be successfully encountered only by a huntsman thoroughly conversant with his duties; and it is not awarding too high praise to say that Arthur Heal was always "the right man in the right place." In addition to his other undeniable qualifications, his light weight must always have told in the long and trying days which are the rule rather than the exception here. Mr. Fenwick Bisset himself laboured under the disadvantage of riding over twenty stone, but, in spite of this, he was always "forward." Of course, the class of horse he rode was very different to that capable of carrying his huntsman; and the prices he paid for his weight-carriers were, as the famed "Dominie" would have put it, "prodigious."

In December 1880, Mr. Bisset having resigned, Lord Ebrington became Master, and Mr. Bisset generously presented the pack to the hunt. About this time one of its warmest supporters, Mr. Granville Somerset,

Q.C., with whom I was, for a time, in chambers at King's Bench Walk, died, and two years later saw the death of another revered old follower of the hunt, the immortal "Parson" Jack Russell. Old Babbage, too, was gone, and gaps such as these are hard to fill. As after events proved, no better substitute for Mr. Bisset could have been found than Lord Ebrington, who continued to show the same good sport which was always associated with his predecessor.

And now let us imagine ourselves, on a bright morning in late August, jogging along in the warm and genial sunshine to meet the hounds at Hawkcombe Head, and here the North Devonian "rank and fashion," to say nothing of the North Devonian "rank and file," are assembled in force. Without delay a move is made for Larkbarrow, where by the lonely shepherd's cottage, right out upon the moor, the pack is kennelled. In due course the huntsman makes his selection of those hounds he requires for "tufters," some five couple in all, and in company with

the "harbourer" and the Master trots away in one direction, whilst the whip gallops off in another. After a long wait we hear that a stag has crossed Badgworthy, and has gone away over Brendon. The pack is hastily unkennelled, and laid on. Scent is bad at first, and the great, solemn-looking 25-inch hounds can only puzzle out the line slowly. Then, as they go over Badgworthy Hill, the pace improves, and they run sharply down over the heather to Farley Water. Over Cheriton Ridge, they go by Hoar Oak and the Chains, across Lynton Common. All this time horses are on good, sound ground, and can gallop on clean and hard "going." As they cross the West Lynn, hounds are travelling at best pace and heading for Woodbarrow. The aspect of the chase then quickly undergoes an entire change, for whereas beforehand we could gallop freely, we are now reduced to scrambling through mire and dirt, almost hock deep, and have to follow one another like a flock of sheep. Woe be, now, to the budding hero who would try a short

cut, surely would he get "bogged." Scent continues to improve, and we must hustle along somehow. Fortunately we are riding to a leader who is at once bold and cautious, and our friend "Cinqfoil," we know, will lead us into no difficulties. Without any sign of a check onwards they go over the Exe Plain, and head for Brendon Two Gates. Our quarry has gone down the Doone Valley, and thence he turns, left-handed, into Badgworthy Wood. Just by the deer park a momentary respite enables us to give our steaming horses a blow, and take one for ourselves. But before we can slip off our horses hounds are away again, and we get a rattling gallop over Black Barrow to the Colley Water. Then comes the long hill up to the Exford road, and, "grinning and hugging," we clamber up it at the best pace our steeds can command. Faster than ever they run over Porlock Common, and along Hawkcombe, past Porlock Vale, and down to the sea. There, in Porlock Bay, is the closing scene witnessed, and the obsequies celebrated, of this good stag.

He was a veteran, and in point of freshness at the finish looked like "giving points" to many of the dead-beat horses which had been toiling along in his wake.

But having spoken of the poetry, let us not forget the prose of stag-hunting, and I cheerfully acknowledge the very real enjoyment that has fallen to me whilst following the carted animal, in various countries, good, bad, and indifferent.

The four best-known packs of staghounds —the Queen's, Lord Rothschild's, the Essex, and the Mid-Kent—are all within easy rail of London. Roughly speaking, much of the Queen's and the Essex, all of Lord Rothschild's, and about half of the Kentish country, is good. The Vale of Aylesbury is as near perfection as possible: it is all grass, practically, with beautiful flying fences, over which no first-rate hunter, until he tires, at least, ought to come to grief. Speaking for myself, I would sooner take an average run and two average falls over the Vale, than the best of runs, minus the tumbles, in an indifferent

country. The "fields" are enormous, but, generally speaking, there is plenty of room at the fences. When I was last there, and following this splendid pack, which, by the way, was started in 1839, Fred Cox was still hunting them, and despite the manifold injuries he has sustained in falls innumerable, which have made his seat on a horse cramped and unnatural, was always with his hounds. Mark Howcutt was then first whip, and a bolder cross-country horseman I never want to see. He was going then, and goes now, as hard as we happy youths did at the age of eighteen or twenty, when we "feared nothin' c'os we knowed nothin'," as old Jem Hills, the huntsman of the Heythrop, used to put it.

Some fine runs fall to the lot of the constant follower of the Essex Staghounds, especially when they fly across the open Roothings. The plough is light riding—almost as light as grass—and it would take a very big "field" indeed to cause any crowding at the big open ditches. You can "have" them pretty much where you like, and there is no need to follow

even so good a pilot as Mr. Sheffield Neave, the Master and Huntsman, would be. As a matter of fact, small fields are the almost invariable rule in this country; indeed, a few additional followers (subscribers!) would be an unquestionable advantage to the pack. Every Tuesday—almost always in the Roothings—and each alternate Saturday, are their hunting days. The Roothing ditches are formidable—more, as a former whip to this pack, Mr. Edward Neave, was saying to me, a day or two since, from their depth than their breadth; for a broad ditch may often be negotiated by scrambling half-way down before jumping. The Roothings is, probably, the nearest approach to a flying country that Essex can show. To the Londoner casting about for a "happy hunting ground," I should certainly say "hunt in Essex" rather than in Kent or Surrey, and as I said before, there is, with the Essex Staghounds, the great advantage of small fields and plenty of room.

I have had some fine runs with the Mid-Kent Staghounds from time to time, and

parts of their country are very good to ride over. They have not yet discovered a greater traveller amongst their deer than the famous "Moonlight," which after being enlarged about mid-day, ran on, or at all events was not taken, until eight o'clock that night! But it is no unusual thing for a run of twenty to thirty miles to take place over the Maidstone side of the country, which is certainly their best.

The Surrey Staghounds, over whose destinies Mr. Tom Nickalls, of Nutfield, has for very many years presided, have always shown good sport when the country has afforded them opportunity. The demon builder, alas! is always on their track, and on too many occasions, each season, they have to contend with serious difficulties. But for all that, I have enjoyed some capital spins with them over the steep Surrey hills, and live in hopes of doing so again.

The Surrey Farmers' staghounds, which hunt the district around Epsom, Surbiton, Ewell, and Leatherhead, and have their kennels at Chessington, near the place of

that good sportsman George Bird, have just been deprived by death of their new Master, Mr. D'Avigdor. By his death the hunt has sustained a great loss. He had been Master but a very short time, and had assumed the reins of office at a time when such a man was badly wanted.

To go on into the adjoining county of Sussex, one may get some fine sporting runs with the Warnham, and either Dorking (where the kennels are) or Horsham are very accessible places for these hounds. With the Enfield Chase (Colonel Somerset's) I never had the pleasure of going, but should imagine that they must be rather cramped for room.

A somewhat erroneous notion seems to prevail with regard to a deer's sagacity. Mr. Jorrocks, we know, likens the hunting of the deer to the "'unting of a hass," but, as a matter of fact, a deer is by no means a fool. Witness the clever way, for instance, in which a hunted stag will go and push up another to take his place before hounds. When faddists talk of the cruelty of stag-

hunting, and the terrible sufferings undergone by the quarry in his fear of the hounds, they are either speaking in guileless ignorance, or else doing their best to belittle the fame of the late Ananias. I cannot call to mind a single instance of the ordinary paddock-fed deer showing any fear of hounds; many an one calmly starts grazing when first enlarged, and has to be actually driven away. Even so, they usually start at a very casual trot: it is well authenticated that in a certain hunt the deer used to jog out to the meet beside the huntsman's horse, and in the middle of the pack; run his line, and then return to his paddock in the same way. And if the "cruelty" criers, who are constantly running a tilt against the Royal pack, would only come out and ride to the finish with staghounds, then get off their horses and *tackle the deer*, probably some of their sympathy would be reserved for themselves instead of "slopping over" on the "victim." A stag is often a nasty customer to collar, and I have seen hounds, and men, too, "for-

warded" in relentless fashion by a wicked one at the end of a long and fatiguing gallop. One particularly amusing scene I witnessed some eight or nine seasons back. Our stag had "soiled," or taken to the water, in a mill-dam. The water was shallow, and the stag set his hind quarters against the mill wall, and with lowering eye waited for the coming struggle. Hounds, whose valour exceeded their discretion, plunged in, and half swam, half waded, towards the quarry. One after the other they retired howling, as they were struck and beaten off, the stag seeming to enjoy the fun. Our second whip —whom we will call Tommy—made a lasso of the thong of his crop, and leaning as far as he could over the wall, dropped his noose securely over the animal's head. At that moment another hound attacked the foe in front, and the said foe suddenly lowered his head to give him a warm reception. Poor Tommy, who hadn't allowed for this action, was forcibly jerked off his precarious perch on the wall, and fell neck and crop over

the stag's back and souse into the water beside him, amid the roars of merciless laughter from "all and sundry" who stood watching the performance. If he had only let go of the crop he might have saved himself easily, but one never does manage to think of those things at the right moment.

Wire is a terrible bugbear to a stag; he never seems able to see it, and I have witnessed several of the poor brutes get falls, more or less severe, over this ever-to-be execrated thing. I only hope that hereafter all our "cuss-words account," swelled as it is to enormous dimensions through making speeches on the subject of wire, will be sent in to the people who invented and the people who use such an abomination. As to *barbed* wire ——! I have wasted half-an-hour trying to think of an adjective that shall adequately express what I think upon the subject. I have failed to do so, and, therefore, pass on to another subject.

For the man who can only snatch a day with hounds occasionally, the stag offers,

perhaps, more attractions than foxhounds. To such an one, a blank day is a more serious matter than it is to the votary of the chase whose time is his own, and who gets his two or three days a week. With the stag, you are sure of your gallop; and in addition to this, the meet is generally at a later hour—an additional advantage not to be underrated by the Londoner or business man. A bigger hound and a bigger quarry, coupled with a stronger scent, makes the pace, as a rule, much faster than it is with foxhounds; but even the chase of the lordly stag gives way, in point of speed, to that of the gay red herring!—which, by the way, is not a herring at all, but, in most cases, a rabbit skin well "scented" with aniseed, or other unholy compound. If a man wants pace alone in following hounds, undoubtedly he should place the drag first, stag second, and fox third. But, given a good fox-hunting country, I much doubt whether many people would be found following either drag or stag. "Ay, there's the rub!" Fate does not plant us all

in a first-rate fox-hunting country; and if she did, the fickle jade would probably uproot us just as we had got spoilt for any other!

As far as I have been able to see, a deer, whilst still full of running, cares little or nothing as to whether he runs up wind or down. In fox-hunting you can always calculate, with more or less certainty, on your quarry following out certain vulpine rules under given circumstances; but, according to my observation—and I merely, of course, give it in the most humble manner for what it is worth—there is no calculating upon how a deer will run. They seem to have no preference for hill over vale, for open down over stiffly fenced country, or *vice versâ*. I have seen deer dodge about on an open down, and run perfectly straight over a cramped country thickly interspersed with formidable obstacles. You don't know where to have them in this respect, so the very best plan is to follow Assheton Smith's example, and "go into every field with the hounds!"

# HARRIERS

"UNCOUPLE at the timorous flying hare," says Shakespeare, and in no parts of these Islands has the injunction been more largely obeyed than in the West country, where the sport is, to-day, more popular than ever. But harriers are to be found pretty well distributed all over the country now, and the chase of the hare is by no means a thing to be looked down upon. It is often said that "harriers should not be allowed to hunt fox," and I think to that saying might be added, "fox- and stag-hunters should not be allowed to hunt hare," because when they do so comparisons, which, as we know, are "odious," will inevitably be made, and always to the disadvantage of the slower, if more scientific, sport.

As a school, no less for young horses than

for budding sportsmen, nothing can be better than to follow (not too closely, *bien entendu!*) a pack of harriers. With regard to the former, in my humble opinion, this plan is by far the best one to inoculate your beginner with a love for hunting. Harriers are slow enough to enable a horse to look about him, and, if he is sensible, he will soon begin to take an interest in the sport. Again, he can "have" his fences as slowly as he likes, and even if he gets down, there is usually plenty of time to pick himself up again and catch hounds before they have got very far.

To those men who love hunting for hunting's—as distinguished from riding's—sake, few things can be prettier than to watch the work of these patient, clever, though quarrelsome, little hounds. Of all the harrier packs it has been my good fortune to follow, I always thought the Shotesham, in Norfolk, hunted by Mr. Fellowes, was the best. Once a tremendously "hard" man in the Shires, Mr. Fellowes afterwards made the perfection of a harrier huntsman. It was whilst following

him on one occasion that I got a curious fall, for galloping at a fence my girths flew, and so did I! whilst almost at the same moment my horse slipped up on his side and measured his length on the ground.

Harriers ought to be encouraged to spread themselves well when drawing a field, for many a hare almost requires to be kicked up; they are real adepts at lying low, and "sitting tight." The "field," too, may be of considerable service here, especially in beating up hedgerows, for harriers are none too keen on doing this for themselves. A hare will rarely give much sport before January, and in that month and February I have occasionally seen them make a four or five mile point, and go a great pace, too, instead of constantly ringing, as is their wont.

Beckford says, in speaking of harriers, that "you should never exceed twenty couple in the field"; but in most countries little more than half that number will be found to suffice; they run better together, and there is less chance of their foiling the ground. As

to the *sort* of hound best adapted to show sport, it is rather difficult to describe it, and far harder still to breed it. The small fox-beagle, the foxhound, and what the above-named great authority describes as "the large, slow-hunting harrier," must be judiciously blended in order to produce the likeliest kind of hound. About nineteen inches is the best size. Of course an even keener sense of smell, less pace and dash, and more patience are required than suffice in the foxhound. To over-match a hare is to at once spoil your own sport.

When once a hare is found, huntsman and field cannot be too quiet.

> "Let all be hushed,
> No clamour loud, no frantic joy be heard,
> Lest the wild hound run gadding o'er the plain
> Untractable, nor hear your chiding voice,"

sings Somerville, the poet of the Chase, and I may add that for such an one as he describes, an early "hanging day" might well be fixed! A policy of "masterly inactivity" is a useful thing at a check, when hounds should be

severely left alone. Speaking to them merely distracts their attention from the business in hand, and gets their heads up. Of course if the "fault" is a long one, the huntsman's assistance will be needed. It is impossible to lay down any rule for making a cast; the circumstances of the moment will be the best guide to a man in this. It is notorious that a hare will always run at his best and straightest when in a strange country, or in a mist, and where hares are scarce. Up wind or down seems to make no difference to them; and in this respect they resemble a deer, and are very unlike a fox, which, it is well known, almost invariably goes away down wind. As it is a common thing with hares to either cross or run up roads, it is most desirable that in every pack there should be a few hounds who can hunt on such ground—a peculiar and distinct gift.

Years ago I had many a good day with Mr. Henry Lubbock's harriers, in the West Kent country, and with the redoubtable "Jack" at the head of affairs we saw the

end of many a stout Kentish hare after a three or four mile point.

When following harriers we ought to be especially careful, as farmers are much more severely tried by a hare-hunting field than by the following of either fox or stag. The pursuit of both of the last-named usually involves the crossing of a field but once, whereas a hare will often double back, cross and re-cross the same piece of ground over and over again, and thus pave the way to doing considerable damage, unless horsemen exercise a certain amount of self-control.

I am sure I did the farmers a very good turn when, years back, I frequently whipped-in to a pack of harriers, and the huntsman and I being old cronies, and fond of a gallop, we used to often manage to slip the field, and have a jolly good run all to ourselves; the only thing was, that "the field" didn't quite see the fun of subscribing for our express benefit, and the game was, consequently, put down with a firm hand!

The establishment of the Peterborough

Harrier and Beagle Show is a step in the right direction, and will do much to improve the status of hare-hunting, and the method of kennel management, in the near future.

"First catch your hare," goes the old saying, but having caught her, the moot point of "what to do with her" arises. There is certainly no need to give the quarry to the pack, and it may do far more good in the interests of hare-hunting to present it to the farmer on whose land it was found — the inside is quite sufficient to distribute to the hounds. As to the argument that hounds lose their keenness when deprived of the *spolia opima*, I would ask, "How about hounds hunting the carted deer, or a drag?" Depend upon it, hounds will be equally keen, if they are worth their salt, with or without the spoils of victory to crunch.

Some huntsmen are great sinners for the sake of blood, and wink at their hounds chopping hares. This should be prevented at any cost, as nothing is more annoying to the field—and the hare!

A hare in running will generally describe a circle, its size varying with circumstances, such as the nature of the country, the state of her own vigour, &c. Puss is by no manner of means a fool, and the cunning and shifts a hunted one will display are astonishing, such as, for instance, doubling back on her own footprints; and when this trick is practised on a highroad or dry footpath, it is very effective in bothering hounds. After doubling they often make a most astounding spring, and wait till hounds have passed, then creep quietly back the same way they came.

There are few things more extraordinary to me than the fact that when drawing for a hare there seems, as long as she lies quietly in her form, to be *no scent;* for, have we not all, at times, watched hounds sniffing about within a yard of the terrified quarry, or actually passing over her form without winding her? Scent, as we know, is one of the hidden mysteries of the chase, which not even so great an authority as the Duke of

Beaufort has fathomed ; for, in the Badminton book on hunting, he writes : "Scent it unquestionably is which enables the hounds to follow the line of the fox, but from what portion of the frame it emanates—whether it sometimes lies on the ground, or rises a few inches above it, and what are the atmospheric conditions most favourable to its development—seem to be vexed questions. . . ." It has been suggested that the solution to the case of the hare in her form, is that the animal gives out no scent until she begins to travel. Be this as it may, it is well known that as a hare is sinking, when before hounds, scent gets perceptibly less, until it very nearly dies out altogether.

A friend of mine, a Master of harriers, told me that he bought a useful hunter at the hammer for fifty guineas, and rode him nine seasons ; after which, thinking he would like a souvenir of the old horse, he had him painted. His groom was very pleased with the likeness, and asked his master "how much

them artist chaps charged" for such a thing? "I paid fifty guineas for this," was the reply, whereat the groom was struck dumb with astonishment. Later on in the day the following was reported from the servants' hall: "Master's been tryin' to deceive me. Wanted to make me believe that picture of Old Jack cost fifty guineas! Why, that's all he paid for the horse itself!"

Almost the same thing happened to Mr. MacWhirter, the well-known painter, who told me the story himself. After the artist had sold his famous picture of "The Vanguard," he naturally took considerable interest in the splendid bull which he had painted as the central figure, and meeting the worthy Scotch farmer who had owned it, inquired after the animal's welfare.

"I did varra weel wi' him. I sold him for just —— guineas." (I forget the amount now.)

"What a curious thing!" exclaimed Mr. MacWhirter; "that is the exact amount I got for the picture of him."

The artist told me he should never forget the look the man gave him. He said nothing, but there was no mistaking the language of the eye. It plainly said that Mr. MacWhirter was telling a stately lie! The bare notion of a picture of the bull making the same money as the bull itself was altogether too much for Highland credulity!

# DRAGHOUNDS

If the saying of Montaigne, the wise French philosopher, be true, that "Nothing gives us more satisfaction than to witness the misfortunes of our friends," surely the "moving accidents by flood and field" almost inseparable from the "pursuit of the red herring," must be pleasant to witness for those prudent folk who keep "out of the hurly-burly!" It may be open to objections—what sport is not?—but of all the wholesome, inspiriting, rough-and-tumble games for a horseman, I think nothing beats drag-hunting, and I have had as long an experience of it as most people.

Now, a drag pack should be well done, or not done at all; that is to say, if men bring out a lot of hounds just fit for the halter, and see them stringing all over the place—

in fact, your pack being in several parishes at one and the same time—if you turn out dressed as though huntsman and whips were going to kill rats in a barn; and above all, if you seek to emulate the example of old Bill Bean, the arch-trespasser, as the Druid calls him, then the whole thing becomes a farce, and you make enemies in the neighbourhood, not only for dragging, but, much more serious still, for hunting. If I were asked what is the first and most important thing in establishing and keeping up a drag pack, I should answer unhesitatingly, a tactful Master. Farmers, landowners, and Masters of hounds all have to be propitiated and kept friendly; a bad Master of draghounds will wreck the whole concern in a single season.

A model Master of draghounds is Colonel Yorke, R.H.A., who has now ruled at Woolwich for several seasons past. The district is very fortunate in retaining his services for so long a time. In the following account—which I originally wrote for *Bailey's Maga-*

*zine*, and which, by the kindness of the Editor, I am permitted to reprint here—the Royal Artillery draghounds will be found fully dealt with.

It is nearly a quarter of a century since Mr. Thacker, the senior veterinary surgeon at Woolwich, and one of the finest horsemen that ever rode "between the flags," conceived the idea of starting a pack of draghounds. Mr. Thacker, who was formerly in the 10th Hussars, was a small, spare man, his face badly scarred from the contests he had had, and the falls sustained when riding young and vicious horses. Nearly every bone in his body had been broken at one time or another, but his nerve was of iron, and he was "hard" to the backbone. After one season, he handed over the Mastership to Captain (now Colonel) Lynes, R.H.A., who had then just returned from Canada, and a better man could hardly have been chosen. On being appealed to, the neighbouring farmers and landowners met the newly-formed hunt in a thoroughly sportsmanlike

manner, and such names as those of the three brothers Russell, true type of the fine old English gentleman-farmer; Cook, who then held the Government lands by the side of the river at Plumstead, and in days gone by used to ride with the drag; Christie, May, Maxwell, and Colonel Forster will be held in affectionate esteem as long as the hunt has its being. Many of the lines then available—and the drag extended its operations then, as now, as far as Sevenoaks—are now partly or wholly built over, and what used to be one of the best in the way of big fencing, the Burnt Ash line, is now entirely covered by bricks and mortar. The number of hounds has never varied very materially; at the outset there were about 15½ couples, drafts from the Duke of Beaufort's, Bramham Moor, Belvoir, Lord Portsmouth's, &c., whilst the present strength of the establishment is 14½ couples, including contributions from Mr. Lort-Phillips's, Lord Portsmouth's, the Goodwood, and others. The kennels at first were built against the Remount Establishment, and

were very good of their kind, including benches, feeding-yard, playground, boiling-house, and yard for isolating any hounds when necessary. The present kennels consist of a detached building standing in the rear of the Remount Establishment, and containing still better accommodation.

Colonel Lynes, following Mr. Thacker's good example, was always in the habit of feeding the hounds himself at four o'clock each day, and during the period of his Mastership he only missed doing so on three occasions. Despite his care, however, they were nearly going without their Christmas dinner on one occasion. The gallant Colonel was to walk out with a friend to Southend, about six miles from Woolwich, to dine on Christmas Day, and as they had to pass within two hundred yards of the kennels, they just looked in to see that all was well. On going there they found the hounds locked up, but as they appeared restless, Colonel Lynes tried to find the kennel-man, but without avail. Thereupon they climbed over

the palings, found no fire in the copper, and no feed ready, so without more ado the Master and his friend, "handsome Jack Forster," the sobriquet by which he was known throughout the army, set to to prepare them a meal, fed them, and then proceeded on their journey just as darkness fell. Before getting half a mile they came across a drunken man lying in the middle of Shooters' Hill Road, and when they went like good Samaritans to pull him out of the way of being run over, lo and behold! the missing kennel-man. The first words he uttered were unfortunate ones for himself. He said on recognising Colonel Lynes, "I've fed the hounds!" As Colonel Lynes, although the best-hearted man in the world, doesn't wear wings or travel about with a portable halo, deponent sayeth not what then took place, but the proceedings did not commence with prayer.

At that period the Master had to find his own Whip, and Colonel Lynes's head groom turned them to him during his tenure of office. The only attempt at a hunt uniform

then was a black coat with black buttons, on which were inscribed the letters, in white, R.A.H.

That season they ran a drag in the vicinity of Woolwich twice a week, and, in addition, took the hounds by invitation into the Windsor district once a week, where they obtained some very brilliant gallops. In order to do this it became necessary to make some arrangements with the South-Western Railway Company for the conveyance of hounds and horses to Windsor, and the General Manager met the gallant Master in the most friendly spirit, and generously offered the needful horse-boxes for nothing! On sounding the South-Eastern Railway people it was found that they would do nothing, and would not abate their usual charges a penny. At this Mr. Barth, a large contractor at Woolwich, came forward in the most sportsmanlike manner and offered to van the hounds up to Waterloo and back, which he did, throughout the season, at his own expense.

The first Windsor run was from Skindle's to Eton, by a zigzag line of about six miles, and the field numbered no less than sixty, including many officers of the Household Brigade. It was a grand spin, and plenty of grief resulted, the Master getting a fall at the fence before the check. Lord Charles Ker was the worst sufferer on the list of the wounded, as Northern Light, the steeplechase horse, gave him a very bad cropper indeed.

A notable run about this time was one in the Woolwich district, upon an occasion when the officers of the 9th Lancers (stationed at Hounslow) were the guests of the R.A. There was a lot of jealous riding that day, and when one finds, in the list of those following the pack, such well-known names as, *inter alia*, "Sugar" Candy, Lord "Bill" Beresford, Grant, Dick Clayton (killed at polo in India), M'Calmont—all of the 9th Lancers — Lynes, Thacker, and "Daddy" Annesley, of the Gunners, such a state of things is hardly astonishing.

That season, during two gallops in the

Windsor country, the Hon. Greville Nugent, better known to the race-going portion of the public as "Mr. St. James," a most brilliant steeplechase rider, had the ill-luck to break two horses' legs, a very curious circumstance. Two ladies—Lady Julia Follett and Mrs. Richardson (afterwards Lady Parker), a sister of Captain Harford—came out pretty frequently with the pack.

Lieutenant Custance, R.A., assumed the reins of office when Colonel Lynes resigned. Each year, of course, the builder made fresh inroads on the existing lines, but, nevertheless, the hunt was carried on much as usual. Other lines were found, or the old ones slightly deviated from, in order to avoid those parts no longer available; and good spins have been had of recent years on the Essex side of the river, besides two or three (by permission) in the Old Surrey country. The best—if that is synonymous with biggest—lines now are Bromley, starting from the house of that capital sportsman and good friend of the hunt, Mr. Payne; Farningham,

which includes in its second half the land of Mr. John Russell; Mottingham, not quite so good, alas! as it was when we galloped over its big fences of eight or ten years ago; and the "home" line, commencing out of the Shooters' Hill Road, skirting Welhall and Mr. George Russell's land, and finishing, as to the first half, in the Crown Wood, about midway between Eltham and Black Fen. It should be mentioned that the Mottingham track is now extended by making the finish on the famous Middle Park Stud Farm, where the Messrs. Blenkiron have bred so many good winners in times gone by. A soldier's pack must necessarily know a constant supply of fresh Masters, and, during the writer's connection with it, such "good men and true" as Captain Allsopp, Major Hickman, Captain "Bill" Russell (killed by his horse falling on him in India), Captain Jeffreys, Captain Saunders, Mr. Mackenzie, and last, but by no means least, Major, now Colonel Yorke, the present Master, have all held office, the latter resuming the reins for the second time

after an interval of seventeen years. It would be impossible to find any better man for the position than Colonel Yorke, a keen sportsman, a lover of hounds, and, both in and out of the Service, enjoying a personal popularity that is as thoroughly well deserved as it is useful to him as Master of the Drag.

In the summer of 1879 dumb madness broke out, and the whole pack had to be destroyed. The following season a new pack was formed by drafts from Lord Tredegar's, the Cumberland, and one or two others, but was again broken up on the death of the then Master, Major Ward Ashton, in March 1880.

Then comes an interval of about four years, during which the kennels stood empty; but in 1883–4 another lot was got together, and Major Hickman became Master. In the following spring madness again destroyed the pack. Captain Allsopp took over the hounds from Major Hickman, and it was during his term of office that, for the first time, a regular uniform was adopted, and the Master and whips now wear the colours

of the Gunners (red and blue) in the form of a blue coat with red collar, than which nothing could look neater against the orthodox white breeches and black velvet cap. They hunted then three days a fortnight, but soon after changed it to twice a week, as now. The present fixtures are made for Tuesdays and Fridays.

Very few claims for damage are ever sent in by the farmers and landowners. At the annual dinner given at the Mess, two or three of them have even declared their belief that a fence looks more picturesque after a charge of cavalry has swept over it!

During Major Yorke's first period of Mastership, 1874–5, he was in the habit of sending the kennel-man on, by train, with the "worry" to the finish. One day he never arrived, and on the Master getting back to kennels, he rated the man for his remissness. "Beg pardon, sir," said the culprit, "but as we wasn't out last Toosday, *I kept the worry*, and when I got to the station they wouldn't let me into the train; they said a' smalt too bad!"

Amongst the many good horses I have seen following the pack may be mentioned The Midshipmite, old Ballot-Box, who ran third for the Liverpool with twelve stone up, Southdown, and Ingle-go-Jang, Willoughby, Chopette, Athlete, Confidence, and Surprise, the last seven all Point to Point winners; The Roman and Gold Dust, a wonderful couple of heavyweight hunters belonging to that good sportsman Colonel Hutchinson; and Shane O'Neil, a winner at Punchestown and Aldershot.

An account of the falls and general mishaps I have witnessed, and at times most unwillingly shared whilst enjoying these truly cheery gallops, would fill a volume, but in all the years I have been with them there has never been a life lost, except indirectly. The Household Brigade pack has not been so fortunate, and the sad death of Colonel Robinson, whilst following them in March of this year (1895), is fresh in the memory of all. On one occasion, at Farningham—always a stiff line—my horse fell at the third fence, and it was some

time ere he consented to be mounted again. I jogged on after hounds until a strange sight met my gaze in a water meadow separated from the field I was in by a big dyke. It was a horse which was walking slowly along with apparently something hanging down by his side. Fearing I hardly knew what, I scrambled into the field, and after going some distance found that the apparition was a man hanging head downwards from his saddle, his feet being firmly wedged into the stirrup-irons; a very unpleasant position unless help had come. Another curious accident happened when running the Shooters' Hill line. After the check, and at the beginning of the second line, four of us charged the first fence abreast, and every one was simultaneously grassed! Once a ludicrous thing happened at Bexley, in the boggy water meadows. My horse was taking off at a brook when the rotten bank let him in head first, just as I slipped over his tail and took my seat upon "the flure" behind him. That incident nearly robbed the Service of a most promising young officer,

with whom I rode home afterwards, for he laughed so immoderately at the recollection of the scene that once or twice I seriously feared an apoplectic attack for him. Either on the Bromley or Farningham line—I forget which now—one deplorably wet day, when horses sank up to their hocks, the whole field fell, and hounds finished alone!

It has never fallen to my lot to ride with the Household Brigade pack at Windsor, but they have, I know, a very pretty country to go over, and I have seen some of their lines, which are, unquestionably, stiff ones.

The Windsor drag will sometimes detrain at Southall, on the Great Western Railway, and ride a line by Hanwell Church to Greenford Green, where, by the way, Mr. Perkin's kennels testify to the existence in a flourishing condition of the Greenford Drag Hunt. I have seen this pack laid on within a stone's throw of Acton railway station, which is the nearest point to London at which hounds are ever seen nowadays. For a five-guinea subscription a man may see a great deal of fun

on Saturday afternoons if he possess a horse that can jump, and is not afflicted with nerves when the cry is "War' wire!"

Several years ago I had some good gallops with the Epsom drag. The "field" was all "quality" as a rule, and with the faces of W. H. Moore, Harry Beasley, Jack Jones—who then trained and rode H.R.H. the Prince of Wales' "chasers"—Arthur Hall, C. Lawrence, the Nightingalls, J. Adams, *et hoc genus omne* around, it was difficult to believe you were not riding in a steeplechase.

A drag pack is essentially useful in a bad country. By means of the human runner—and here I may mention that the best "two-legged fox" I have ever followed is Gunner Grainger, who has officiated in this capacity for the Woolwich Drag for a great number of years—even a country like West Kent can be made into an "all grass and flying fences" line.

Major Porteous—a real good man both across country and on the polo ground—once lent me a pony for the winter, a game little

chestnut, rejoicing in the name of Dinah, and although it was rather a case for the S.P.C.A., I rode her with the drag one day, really meaning to pull up at the first big obstacle. But the game little mare sailed along so gaily, and jumped so well, that I went on until we came to a five-barred gate, chained and locked. I was about to pull up and go back when I saw my diminutive mount cock her ears at the obstacle. A "Come on, old girl," and she flew at the gate and topped it like a sparrow hopping over a twig! She jumped two or three more fences, and then came to a big hairy one which stood up too high for even her powers. But she never hung fire for a moment. With an amount of "cheek" which was absolutely sublime for so tiny a steed, she dived clean through it, like a circus clown through a paper hoop! We were both scratched all over, but no fall. Dinah would jump a single hurdle standing alone.

This year the Royal Artillery Drag have, on two or three occasions, been honoured with the presence of Field-Marshal Lord

Roberts, V.C., who, mounted either by Colonel Yorke or Captain Ferrar, has gone right well with them, and been "on hand" at the finish, in spite of a fall in the early part of the run. The man who was undeterred by a hugely outnumbering host of Afghan warriors, was not to be stopped by a drag-line, however stiffly it might be fenced!

As far as I am aware, none of the drag packs advertise their meets. These are kept strictly private, and properly so, both in the interests of the farmers, who would hardly welcome a big field, and also in those of the followers of the packs themselves. Assimilating more nearly to a cross-country race than merely riding to hounds, there is a certain amount of crowding and haste to "get off" from the mark, usually followed by a little jostling and jealousy at the first fence or two, which makes a limited number of starters a welcome thing. As it is, with often less than thirty men out, the Recording Angel has to be fairly "sat down on and ridden" when the refusing and falling begin!

What would it be if a hundred or two of impatient sportsmen were waiting their turn at the "jumpable" places in the first fence?

But what glorious fun it is when once you are off! You know hounds are not going to stop; there is none of that horrible quaking one experiences during a run with foxhounds, that scent will fail and the gallop abruptly terminate. And if you exercise common care to see that you ride in the track of hounds, you know you can't be turned over by that now, alas! almost universal curse, wire. On you go, speeding over the grass nicely, in the wake of the flying pack, with perhaps only a dozen men around you. A thorn fence, which can be taken anywhere, permits you all to spread, fan-like, each to the spot he has been selecting ever since the obstacle came into view. One after the other you all get over, except that gentleman to the left there, who didn't jump when his horse did. He now "sits on the floor," whilst his riderless nag continues the wild fun of the chase on its own account. Now you jump into and

out of a lane, and then a fine stretching grass meadow, with a "useful" looking brook right down there, in the bottom, its edges fringed with lopped pollards, catches your eye. You take a slight pull at your nag to save his wind, then, just as the last of the hounds scrambles out of the water, making a momentary pause on the farther bank to give his dripping sides a shake, you take right hold of your horse's head, press your legs back and send him at it. One hind leg drops in, but with a flourish of the tail your horse is on *terra firma* all right. Splash goes your nearest follower, who has jumped short. Over come the next half-dozen, in gallant style; two more get in and out again; no one damaged, and off you set again. Hounds have got still farther ahead, but as you are rising a gentle slope now, it would not be judicious to push on just yet. At the top of the long sloping meadow stands a post and rails, to which you at once give your best attention. Crack! goes the top rail, and the rest of the field sing a little hymn of praise

to you for thus clearing the way. You turn sharply right-handed, over a small piece of fallow, jump a fence, and, not seeing the ditch on the far side of it, your horse blunders on to his knees and nose. Up again, and no fall. Now you gallop along a footpath with a hog-backed stile at its far end. Stiles, we know, must not be played with, so we go at this only after carefully pulling our horses well back on to their hind legs. "By Jove! he hit *that* pretty hard!" exclaims a man, as he narrowly misses getting a crumpler. Then across a village green, almost before the resident yokels have time to open their mouths to their full extent in astonishment. A low gate, jumped in single file, and then we all gallop "hell for leather" across a pretty park, topping some beautiful brush-fences that are positively made to be galloped over *en route*, and finally pull up our smoking horses at the spot where the drag has been lifted for the check. We get off our steeds, which, with heads down, tails quivering, and flanks heaving, are glad enough of the time to "blow."

The owner of the park comes out and gives us a jolly welcome, and then two or three of his servants arrive with soda and —— things! The liquid goes down hissing, after that extremely warming gallop! Whilst we wait, men cast up from here, there, and everywhere; some with dirty coats, some without hats, others with a lost iron or broken stirrup-leather to complain of. After a ten minutes' halt on we go again, at a "hound's jog," to start the second line. This time there is a diminished field, casualties in the shape of falls, refusals, blown or injured horses, &c., preventing several from essaying the winding-up gallop of the day.

"Let them get over the first fence, gentlemen," says the Master, as he sits quietly on his horse, in the gateway of a field, intently watching the pack.

Hounds have just picked up the "smell," and with a "tow, yow!" from one, which is quickly taken up by the rest, away they go like lightning, charging and tumbling over the fence at the far side of the field in

merry style. "Now you can go," exclaims the Master, and the whole field is quickly in motion once more. Three formidable blackthorn fences have to be jumped or "tunnelled." The leader, mounted on a weedy, undersized thoroughbred, jumps *into* the first of these, and sticks fast. But the man immediately behind him, not expecting this stoppage *in transitu*, and unable to pull up his very impetuous steed, charges right into him, and, applying as it were a hammer to a nail, knocks him clean through the fence on to his nose in the field beyond. The rest get over in another place, and wading across a shallow stream, jump the next two fences, and come to a water meadow, intersected with more or less rotten-banked ditches. They are not big, however, which is fortunate, considering that our horses are now galloping in peaty ground, well over their fetlocks. This does not last long, and we soon emerge on to a lovely tract of sound grass, with nice, jumpable fences. Here and there a post and rails varies the monotony of the scene, a

couple of stiles are negotiated, and again water looms in sight. Five men are pretty close together as we come to this, and the leading horse whips round and refuses, galloping right across the second man, and causing him to pull up sharply to avoid a collision.

These two men are strangers, so they only glare at each other, and say nothing. Then the same thing exactly happens with the third and fourth horses; but the respective riders of this last pair being bosom friends, they proceed, forthwith, to slang each other like pickpockets! Hounds are now streaming along a wood-side, packing closely, and running as though they knew the finish was near at hand. Indeed, a couple of the most aged and artful—those two qualifications so often go together, by the way!—well knowing this particular line, have dodged across a field to the left, thus cutting off a big corner, to where they know a tasty paunch awaits them. But the rest stick to the scent, and we follow in their train. Along the headlands of a wheat-field we go carefully; for

farmer Joskins is a terror of a man, and objects "on principle"—though he doesn't know *what* principle—to the drag coming over his land, and has been persuaded to allow it "for this occasion only," because it is simply an impossibility for *any one* to resist our Master's frank good-nature and persuasive eloquence. We jump the hurdles at the far end, and emerge on to a stretch of fine old turf. And now as we near the finish, those who have any steam left in their horses at once proceed to turn it on. A bit of racing takes place, one flight of sheep hurdles and a slenderly constituted railing being "knocked to blazes," as our irreverent second Whip calls it, on the way. We pull up our blown and panting steeds, and watch the "worry," as with a blast or two on the horn our Huntsman (and Master) fetches the paunch from the dragsman's cart, and rewards the eagerly expectant hounds with the nastiest conceivable morsels. Then, after a short interval for rest, we light up our cigars, and having thoroughly enjoyed a

gallop, which, had it taken place after a fox, we should probably have alluded to as one of the smartest of the season, jog leisurely homewards.

Drag-hunting is hardly a lady's sport, as may well be imagined. But amongst the few I have seen go well with them may be mentioned Lady Julia Follet, Lady Parker, Mrs. Porteous, Mrs. Harrison, Miss Hoare, and Mrs. C. G. Mackenzie.

I have ridden "all sorts and conditions of" horses with draghounds at different times, but I am persuaded that the ideal mount for them is an old steeplechaser, temperate enough for one to hold with ease. Such an one may, perhaps, be too slow to win steeplechases, but plenty fast enough to hold his own with the drag. My experience of them is that they hardly ever refuse their fences, their courage is undeniable, and you rarely have to send them out of a canter in order to keep pace with the average "hairy." The great drawback is, that after a horse has been any time in a training stable he often gets into the way of pulling hard and rushing his fences.

# STEEPLECHASING

# EARLY DAYS

"EVERYTHING must have a beginning," and steeplechasing was no exception to the rule. Although in "Scott and Sebright" we read of a contest taking place as early as 1792, in Leicestershire—the course being from Barkby Holt to the Coplow and back, about eight miles—between Mr. Charles Meynell, Lord Forester, and Sir Gilbert Heathcote, who finished in the order named, it was not much before 1825 that steeplechasing began to be a popular amusement amongst the hunting fraternity. At that time, and for many years afterwards, the sport was exclusively that of hunting men. Would we might say the same of it to-day! Alas! time has brought its changes on steeplechasing, as it has, and will, on everything, and a decree of divorce has been pronounced between two grand pastimes

which formerly walked so amiably hand in hand. Nowadays, many a man owns steeplechase horses who is not even in sympathy with hunting, let alone a participator in "the sport of kings." Unfortunately, the game has got more and more into the hands of the racing fraternity, and farther and farther away from hunting and its votaries. The era of the jovial dinner, the merry challenge across the table, the laughing acceptance, the stakes deposited then and there, time, conditions, and place settled on over the last cigar—all this has passed away, never to return. There is too much of the "I've got a good horse, but I don't mean anybody to know it" spirit abroad, and too little of the fine old rough-and-ready "I'll match mine against yours, and may the best horse win" principle. There is too much planning and "clearing the way," too little of running for the sport's sake alone. We ought to be very thankful for the great revival of Point to Point races, which will go far to warm up the chilly blood of steeplechasing, and which

not unfrequently introduces us to a useful horse or two whose merit was before unsuspected. So popular have these events become, that almost every well-known hunt has its "Point to Point" as regularly as the season comes round.

But I am getting on too far ahead, and dealing with our own times instead of with those of our fathers and grandfathers before us.

A match, or a sweepstake between three, was the form usually taken by steeplechasing in its infancy. And what a healthy, robust sort of infant it was! With men like the Marquis of Waterford, Mr. Osbaldeston, Captain Ross, Captain Becher, Sir David Baird, Lord Clanricarde, Sir Harry Goodricke, *cum multis aliis*, to ride, and horses such as Moonraker, Gaylad, Peter Simple, Grimaldi, Lottery, and Vivian running, how could steeplechasing fail to become a success?

Gaylad was bought as a three-year-old by Mr. Davy, a tenant farmer in the Brocklesby country, a rare old-fashioned sportsman. He

broke the horse himself, and soon found out he had got a wonder. With his owner in the saddle, Gaylad ran and won at Rugby, Newport Pagnell, and two or three other places, until Elmore, the hunter dealer, cast loving eyes on him, and finally bought the horse for a thousand, with another hundred contingency in case he won the Liverpool. In the Grand National of 1842 Elmore started both Gaylad (ridden by Tom Olliver) and Lottery (Jem Mason). Both horses got the course safely, and Gaylad came out full of running at the last fence, and won.

Moonraker, who won the great 'chase at St. Albans in 1831 from eleven others, had a very humble beginning. To speak quite accurately, no one seems to know what his actual "beginning" was. What is known about him, however, is that before his transmogrification into a steeplechaser he was drawing a water-cart in, it is said, the streets of Birmingham. The purchase price was the extremely modest one of eighteen sovereigns, and the horse owned to almost as many years

when he was victorious in a field of a dozen, as before stated.

In 1832 the large concourse of twenty came to the post for the St. Alban's event, including such good ones as the grey Grimaldi —Squire Osbaldeston's—and Corinthian Kate, but old Moonraker, ridden by Dan Seffert, was again successful. Grimaldi was a horse with a great turn of speed, but he never would face water if he could help it; though with Dick Christian's assistance on foot, and his owner's in the saddle, he beat Colonel Charritie's Napoleon, one of the best jumpers even of that day, although rather slow, in a match at Dunchurch; albeit both he and his opponent got into the Lem, and indulged in a swimming contest *en route*.

The names of Jem Mason and Lottery will always be inseparable in the minds of the older generation of steeplechase devotees; and Captain Becher, on the great Vivian, is another pleasant "mind-picture" for the memory to dwell upon. I am not old enough to have even seen such celebrities,

but one of my forebears, who himself was fond of a gallop between the flags, has many a time given me a description of their prowess. We are much indebted to the late Henry Hall Dixon ("The Druid") for chronicling many of their doings, which would otherwise have been swept away into the forgotten limbo of the past. Some of those fine old-fashioned matches, such as that between Vivian and Cock Robin, with Becher and the Marquis of Waterford riding; Grimaldi and Moonraker, steered respectively by Osbaldeston and Seffert; and the match between Captain Horatio Ross's Pole Cat (owner up) and Mr. Gilmour's Plunder, the hard-riding farmer, Field Nicholson, steering the latter, must have been events worth travelling any distance to see.

The dull dead level of the modern galloping course gives no such opportunity for the exercise of a man's sound judgment (or any, indeed, of his knowledge of, or eye for, a country) as these contests of a past age did. But for all that, where will you find a prettier

sight all the world over than a modern steeplechase at, say either Liverpool, Manchester, Sandown, or Kempton Park?

The great drawback of the early steeplechase, run over a natural country, was that so little of the fun could be seen by the spectators—unless, indeed, they were mounted on clever hunters, and prepared to do a plentiful supply of fencing—and the same objection, unfortunately, applies to the Point to Point race of to-day.

In the month of February 1836 was run the first Liverpool steeplechase at Aintree. Its conditions, however, varied very widely from those obtaining in the Grand National of to-day. "A sweepstake of ten sovereigns each, with eighty added; 12 st. each; gentlemen riders. The winner to be sold for two hundred sovereigns, if demanded;" and Captain Becher won this event with The Duke.

St. Albans, Aylesbury, Cheltenham, and Newport Pagnell were all in a flourishing condition just about this period, with their

"Grand Annuals;" and in 1839 the Liverpool executive substituted for the selling race alluded to above "a sweepstake of twenty sovereigns each, with one hundred sovereigns added; 12 st. each; gentlemen riders; four miles across country; second horse to save his stake; the winner to pay ten sovereigns towards expenses; no rider to open a gate, or ride through a gateway, or more than 100 yards along any road, footpath, or driftway."

In an old sporting paper I have found a complete list of the starters and jockeys for this, the first Grand National, and it may not be inopportune to reproduce it here *in extenso*.

GRAND LIVERPOOL STEEPLECHASE.

| | Jockey |
|---|---|
| Captain Child's Conrad . . . | Captain Becher. |
| Mr. Ferguson's Rust. . . . | W. M'Donough. |
| „ „ Daxon . . . | Owner. |
| „ „ Barkston . . . | Byrne. |
| Lord M'Donald's The Nun . . | Alan M'Donough. |
| Sir D. Baird's Pioneer . . . | Mr. Walker. |
| Mr. Elmore's Lottery . . . | Jem Mason. |
| Sir G. Mostyn's Seventy-four . . | Tom Olliver. |

| | Jockey |
|---|---|
| Captain Lamb's Jack . . . | Wadlow. |
| Mr. Newcombe's Cannon Ball . | Owner. |
| Mr. H. S. Bowen's Rambler . | Morgan. |
| Captain Marshall's Railroad . | Mr. Powell. |
| Mr. Stephenson's True Blue . | Mr. Barker. |
| Mr. Theobald's Paulina . . . | Mr. Martin. |
| Mr. Oswell's Dictator . . . | Carlin. |
| Mr. Robertson's Cramp . . . | Wilmot. |
| Mr. Vevers' Charity . . . . | Hardy. |

This was the particular contest in which the obstacle called to this day "Becher's Brook" obtained its name. Captain Becher, in order to steady Conrad, who was a very headstrong horse, came along directly Lord Sefton dropped his flag, and with Daxon, made joint running to the first brook. Conrad tried to run through the timber set in front of it, shooting his rider clean over his head into the ditch beyond. Becher was in a "tight place," with the whole field streaming after him. In a moment he had scrambled close under the bank, and in this way the rest of the oncoming field cleared him in safety. Jem Mason on Lottery won in a canter by three lengths that day, and it is recorded that, so full of running was the

horse, that he cleared thirty-three feet over the last fence.

It must obviously be impossible within the limited space here available to even make mention of many of the celebrities, human and equine, of these early days. I must ask my readers' pardon for thus merely skimming over some, and even omitting mention altogether of other, of the glories of that "good old time," when steeplechasing was in the "palmiest" of its palmy days.

Gaylad, a rare stayer, and a most accomplished jumper; Peter Simple, a peculiarly beautiful mover, and grand-looking horse, the hero of two Liverpools; the Nun, winner of several chases, True Blue, Cigar, and Cannon Ball were all running about then, and the "hunter dealers," the Elmores and Mr. Tilbury, flourished. The latter owned amongst others Prospero and Culverthorpe, but neither of them was good enough for Lottery and Vivian. "Jack" Elmore did much for the sport, and in his day owned many a good one, Lottery, of course, being

the gem. But men of the stamp of Squire Osbaldeston, Lord Clanricarde, and the Marquis of Waterford were those most deserving of honourable mention as supporters of steeplechasing about this time.

Although not coming under the heading of cross-country sport, one can hardly refrain from alluding to the Squire's great match against time at Newmarket. In an old sporting magazine of December 1831, there is a capital account of the way in which he galloped his four mile heats, and won his £1000 bet with Colonel Charritie, having an hour and twenty-one minutes to spare from the stipulated ten hours' time. In doing the 200 miles, he used twenty-eight different horses, and amongst them was a good little mare, Dolly, by Figaro, owned either then, or immediately afterwards, by my grandfather, and which bred him two or three very useful colts.

Lord Strathmore strongly supported steeplechasing, and was often seen in the saddle to great advantage; Captains Powell and Peel,

Jem Mason, the wonderful brothers M'Donough (Alan and William), Tom Olliver, and many more too numerous to mention here, were amongst the "very best" of the cross-country riding contingent of these early days, and a whole history might be written upon their splendid performances in the saddle. It is not a little remarkable that gallant old Alan M'Donough actually donned silk at the age of sixty-four to ride his last steeplechase.

In the Liverpool of 1840 the almost invincible Lottery came down at the wall * in front of the Stand. He sinned in good company, for no less than five fell at the same place. Charity beat him the following year, and Lottery's penalties effectually stopped him from ever adding a second "National" to his score. Tom Olliver won on Gaylad in 1842 and on Vanguard in 1843, Lottery and Jem Mason being behind him on each occasion. Poor Tom Olliver was always "up to his hat" in debt, and often emerged from durance

* Done away with the following year.

vile to ride in a steeplechase and then return to his stone retreat.

How our forefathers read the conditions of the race as affecting the status of the riders, is one of those things that "no fellow can understand." "Gentlemen riders," say the conditions. What about Jem Mason, Tom Olliver, Byrne, and the two M'Donoughs?

The tape, I imagine, was seldom, if ever, requisitioned in steeplechasing's very early days, and it was left until the year 1847 for a "record" feat to be established, which, as far as we know, stands unrivalled to-day. Chandler, owned at the time by the well-known Ousely Higgins, and ridden by Captain Broadley, was running at Warwick when parts of the course were under water, and the "Badminton" book on steeplechasing tells us that "The brook was swollen to the dimensions of a small river—it was impossible, indeed, to tell how far on each side the overflow extended; but Chandler, coming down to the brook at a great pace, cleared the water at a bound. Onlookers were so

struck, that the distance from the hoof-marks on the taking-off to the hoof-marks on the landing-side was measured, and it was found that the horse had jumped thirty-nine feet." The Steeplechase Calendar gives the following record :—" Regalia led to the brook, into which all fell except Chandler, who thus obtained a great lead, nothing but King of the Valley ever getting near him again."

The following year Captain Little, a disciple of " Black Tom's "—Tom Olliver—won the Liverpool on this horse.

Mr. " Thomas " (Mr. Tom Pickernell) seemed for some time to be a link between the past and the present. He has ridden three Grand National winners, and had a mount in no less than eighteen Liverpools. Anatis, The Lamb, and Pathfinder were all steered most brilliantly by this gentleman to victory; the latter exactly twenty years ago, 1875. Pathfinder had been used as a hack and a Whip's horse before trying his luck at Liverpool, and he was one of the worst horses that ever won. A short time

after this Mr. "Thomas" got a fall at Sandown, which seriously affected his eyesight, and rendered his retirement from the saddle imperative. His second winner, The Lamb, was probably as good as, if not better than, any previous winner of the event. As a clever jumper, few have ever equalled him, and he showed this, with a vengeance, when he cleared four prostrate horses and their riders without touching one of them whilst running at Aintree. If memory serves me, Mr. Arthur Yates was one of the "mighty fallen" on that occasion.

But mention of Mr. "Thomas" and Mr. Arthur Yates reminds me that I have now emerged from the confines of the past, and entered upon the regions of the present. In the next chapter, I propose to run over the names of several of the chasers and their riders which have "made history" for the past thirty years.

# CELEBRITIES OF THE PAST THIRTY YEARS

## I

JUST as in the teeth of all "ten thousand pounder" opposition the Derby is still the Derby to the racing man, so is the great event decided each March upon "Aintree's bleak plain" the highest of all prizes to the votary of steeplechasing. It matters not that Manchester, in the north, puts forth such subtle attractions as a shortened course and a pile of added money, or that Sandown and Kempton, in the south, strive to tempt the best of our cross-country performers to their charming courses — the National's the National "for a' that," and in the steeplechasing world Liverpool always has been, and we sincerely trust always will be, "a name to conjure with."

In 1865 a remarkably good field came to the post for the Grand National, including that sterling performer L'Africaine, a fearfully hard puller, Emblem, Thomastown, Joe Maly, who was made favourite, Alcibiade, and Hall Court, a rare old-fashioned type of hunter. Mr. "Thomas" cut out the work for part of the journey on Thomastown, but this time he had nothing to do with the finish, which was left to Captains Coventry and Tempest on "Cherry" Angell's Alcibiade and Hall Court respectively. The result of a desperate race home was in favour of the former by only a head. L'Africaine, beaten by his weight and the pace combined, was early out of the race.

A rare good judge of a horse, Mr. Studd, was destined to own the next year's winner, Salamander. Mr. Studd was travelling in Ireland on the look-out for some hunters when he chanced upon a rough-coated colt sheltering in a dirty hovel. Taken with his make and shape he soon struck a bargain with the owner for him, and brought him

across St. George's Channel. Here he was put into training, and quickly developed into a really great horse, winning the Liverpool, in the experienced hands of Mr. Alec Goodman, from twenty-nine opponents. The following settling day Mr. Studd took a sum out of the Ring which fairly "knocked the stuffing" out of two well-known bookmakers at the least.

On the occasion of his first victory The Lamb — one of the very best of Liverpool winners — was steered by Mr. George Ede, perhaps as fine a horseman as ever lived, who fairly outrode the jockey of Pearl Diver, though it was a tight fit at the last for supremacy.

Mr. Ede was, in many respects, a most remarkable man, and from an old friend of mine, in Northamptonshire (where Mr. Ede was studying as a farm pupil in his early days), for whom he rode and won many steeplechases, I have learnt some interesting details of his career. On the farm in question the future gentleman rider first met

Ben Land, then in good fettle as trainer and rider, and that worthy at once took a great fancy to the fearless young fellow. He never cared much about farming, but either with hounds or in wearing a silk jacket he was thoroughly at home. Land soon gave him plenty of public practice, and within a very short space of time the brilliant young amateur was in great demand all round the country. He was a man of most charming manners and disposition, a gentleman from top to toe. His kindness of heart endeared him to everybody with whom he was brought in contact, and his death, which he met whilst riding Chippenham over a fence at Liverpool, seemed almost like a national calamity in the world of sport.

For Lord Poulett, one of the keenest steeplechasing owners that ever lived, he won the Liverpool, as before mentioned, on The Lamb, probably the smallest horse in point of inches ever successful for the big event. Nobody rightly seemed to know just what height he stood, but I believe I am stating George Ede's

own opinion of it when I say that he was a shade under fifteen—though, as far as I know, the great gentleman rider never actually put him under the standard. Mr. Ede showed great patience and skill upon Mr. William Blencowe's Acrobat, a horse with a most extraordinary temper. I have a letter by me now in which Mr. Blencowe tells me how he became possessed of this singular animal. "I went," he writes, "to Mr. Bennett of Stone Castle to buy a charming hunter, Othello, and seeing a big bay horse in the stable, with fired hocks, I remarked, 'This is the sort I want to win some hunt steeplechases with. What will you take for him?' Mr. Bennett laughed, and said that if I could ride him out of the yard he would give him to me. I had him saddled, and rode him out without his giving any trouble, though I dared not touch his mouth. After some joking about my present of a horse, I eventually gave eighty guineas for him. He won me seven steeplechases. In fact, he always won when in good temper. He won

the Bedford Hunt Cup with poor George Ede up by half a field, easily beating Captain Machell's Leonidas, who had won the National Hunters' a few weeks previously." Soon after this performance, Captain Machell bought Acrobat from Mr. Blencowe for six hundred guineas, and started him for the Liverpool; that is, he *meant* to start him for that race, but Acrobat himself entertained other views on the subject, and declined to budge an inch when the flag fell, although a man with a hunting crop had been specially detailed to assist in getting the craft under way. No one knows exactly how good the horse was, as when he meant going he was never beaten; when he didn't, he wouldn't try a yard! No mortal ever devised the fence that would stop him, but he wanted "a man" on his back, and George Ede was just that man.

Lord Ronald, owned by that best of good sportsmen the Duke of Beaufort, was also piloted in the many races he won by the same accomplished rider. Lord Ronald will

best be remembered by the present generation as the sire of The Cob, who has done Badminton good service in long distance races within the past few years, and was one of the pleasantest race-horses I ever got on.

Whilst writing of Mr. Ede, let me not forget to record the sad death of the poor little "Lamb." He was sold to go to Germany, and whilst running in a steeplechase at, I think, Baden, he fell on ground as hard as a turnpike road—be it remembered that steeplechasing is a summer amusement in the land of Hochs and Bocks—broke his leg, and had to be destroyed.

That wonderful horse The Doctor, who, despite his being a weaver, a noisy one, a crib-biter, and having a club-foot, was perhaps the very best hunter in Leicestershire during the nine seasons Custance the jockey rode him there, and was only beaten by half a length for the Liverpool by The Colonel (a dual winner) in 1870, when receiving 6 lbs. The Colonel was a great leathering horse, and perhaps one of the very

best that ever won a National. The Doctor, when bearing the weight of seventeen years, was entered for the jumping competition at Oakham, and won, with Dick Shaw, the steeplechase jockey, on his back; his owner electing to ride his second string, a hot-headed brute that would only do his best in Custance's own hands, and this one took second honours.

A great horseman was, and is, Captain "Doggy" Smith, who won the National Hunt Steeplechase at Melton on Game Chicken as far back as 1864. He was also successful in the same race, in 1871, with Daybreak, and in 1874 on Lucellum, and his last win in that contest was on New Glasgow in 1880. During the whole of this period he was one of the very best men across Leicestershire, but has now left Melton and gone to live and hunt in Sussex. Captain H. Coventry, who won the Liverpool on Alcibiade, was another of the same sort, and few, if any, better amateurs, either on the flat or across country, have ever been seen in silk.

I hardly know which Liverpool winner can lay claim to being the very worst that ever took such honours, but I suppose it would be a close race between Shifnal, who gave Robert I'Anson his "blue," and Casse Tête, splendidly ridden by J. Page. Almost everything else fell down in the latter's year (1872) and "lucky Teddy Brayley" (who, sad to say, in spite of his luck died some years back at Bath in abject poverty) saw the mean-looking little chestnut mare, hopelessly beaten by Scarrington to the last hurdles, come in alone, as the latter injured his leg so much at them that he could hardly hobble past the post; and once more Robert I'Anson, prince of professionals, and my boyhood's hero, was baulked of the chief ambition of his life. What a shadow I'Anson looked at the time he could go to scale at less than ten stone; what an impossibility it seemed that he ever could have done so when I last shook hands with him at the Grand Military meeting, this very year!

That luck is a strong element in the game

is undoubted. The names of Casse Tête, Shifnal, Pathfinder, and Old Joe are handed down throughout succeeding generations as Grand National winners; whilst those of Scarrington, Congress, Schiedam, and Ryshworth, infinitely better horses, as I think most unprejudiced people would admit, are thought much less of. Scarrington—who fell dead whilst running in a 'chase at the old Croydon course—must have beaten Casse Tête, bar accident, in 1872; Congress, one of the grandest-looking horses I ever saw, was only defeated a neck by Regal, giving away plenty of weight to the winner; Schiedam (winner of the Grand National Hunters' Steeplechase of 1870) was considered by Mr. J. M. Richardson, who rode him, the best he ever got on—as ill-luck would have it, a horse fell just in front, and Schiedam was brought down on top of him; whilst the last of the quartette I have chosen (merely for purposes of illustration), Mr. Chaplin's Ryshworth, looked all over a winner until close home, but pecking as he landed over the last

fence before the race-course, Mr. Richardson, on Disturbance, just managed to get up. Ryshworth's rider was not very experienced, and in the last quarter of a mile the amateur beat him "all ends up." At the same meeting Ryshworth won the Grand Sefton; Reugny, who was destined to win the great event in the following year, being behind him, in receipt of a stone.

On the last-named animal, the late "member for Brigg" completed his highly meritorious "double"; but the horse was never anything like so good as Commotion's son, who ended his career unfortunately, by ricking his back. It *is* said that Mr. "Pussy" Richardson was of opinion that the course at Liverpool was not half so stiff as the line which had to be negotiated at the famous "Grand National dinner" at Brigg, given to celebrate his victory, where, at Sir John Astley's suggestion, the dinner tickets bore the suitable inscription, "Disturbance, but no Row!"

Chandos never struck me as looking like

a safe conveyance over a big country. And Liverpool is a very big country, despite all that the "fogey" school can say about it. The beautiful chestnut carried his head too much tucked into his chest and galloped too high for a chaser, but as a hurdle-jumper he was absolutely invincible. What particularly struck me about him was that he didn't seem to look where he was going. That does not so much matter "over the sticks," but I have taken too many falls from this sort of horse, at thick fences, not to be rather shy of them now. However, far cleverer heads than mine made him favourite for the big 'chase, and as Jewitt, a first-rate man over a country, and the horse's own trainer, elected to ride him instead of the little black Regal, on whom Joe Cannon had the mount, I dare say it was only prejudice on my part. All the same, it was a lucky prejudice for me personally, for I followed "the Captain's" example which he set at Sandown, and had my coppers on the five-year-old. Chandos

jumped the country much better than I had imagined he would, but he managed to blunder badly at the water and smash one of the rails in front of a fence; after which he landed on his head and turned over, leaving Cannon and Regal to go on and tackle Congress, which they did to such good purpose that the black won by a neck.

Austerlitz, in 1877, was a veritable wonder, and it is difficult to say what weight would have stopped him that day. He must have been a very pleasant horse to ride, and galloped, like his sire, Rataplan, "casually." As a fencer he was magnificent, and just the horse to carry Mr. "Freddy" Hobson home triumphantly. But how he could manage to spare a hand to catch hold of the cantle of his saddle at every fence I cannot, for the life of me, imagine. However, he won, and that is everything.

In 1879 The Liberator was steered to victory by Mr. "Garry" Moore, a very popular win for the Irish brigade, who came over

in great force to back him. I remember this gentleman effecting an extraordinary reformation in "the manners and customs" of Furley, a chestnut gelding by Honiton. This horse I saw win the Great Metropolitan Steeplechase at Croydon, Mr. J. M. Richardson up, from a big and, in point of quality, excellent field, shortly after which he point-blank refused to jump a stick, and turned very savage into the bargain. For a long time nothing could be done with him, but somehow or other "Garry" got him to face his fences again, and once more I witnessed his victory in the same race at Croydon, this time ridden by his trainer. Of the latter I was once told a story, apocryphal perhaps, but here it is.

A friend of his—an Englishman—crossed the Irish Channel in the famous rider's company, and whilst discussing the meditative cigar together at their hotel in Dublin, the Saxon observed—

"Garry, I'm a stranger to this country, as you know. What should you advise me

to do by way of getting a little fun and excitement, eh?"

"Do, is it? Well, go to the top of the hotel steps there, and just shout 'To h— wid Parnell!' an' if ye don't get enough fun and excitement to last ye a fortnight, I'll be mightily surprised!"

This was at the time that the "uncrowned King" was in the zenith of his power.

The year 1880 saw The Liberator—this time with the steadier of 12 st. 7 lbs. on his back—carry Mr. Moore again into the front rank, finishing third; whilst another representative of the Green Isle, Empress, ridden by Mr. Tom Beasley, won. What a wonderful family for turning out first-class steeplechase riders, this! Unhappily, William has now met his death at the game in Ireland.

Speaking of William Beasley's death, it is somewhat strange that, since beginning this chapter, I should have, most unexpectedly, chanced upon the very horse that killed him when he was down at the fatal "double," All's Well, now regularly ridden to hounds

by the Countess of Warwick. Being at Easton, Lady Warwick's place near Dunmow, I took the opportunity of going through the stables and looking at the hunters. Whilst discussing their merits later on, the Countess told me that All's Well was one of the most perfect of hunters, and extraordinarily fast. To use Lady Warwick's own words, "he doesn't know how to fall." *Certes*, he *ought* not, with such a precious burden to bear as the most beautiful woman in Christendom.

In 1881 the little black horse Regal was second, beaten pretty easily by Woodbrook, a "noisy" one; and the next year Lord Manners got Seaman home by a short head, after a desperate race with Tom Beasley on Cyrus. I always think Seaman, fit and well, was one of the horses of the century. The year before he won the Grand National he simply "made hay" of a good field of horses in the Liverpool Hunt Steeplechase, and won by the length of a street, after making the whole of the running. Afterwards he went

very queer behind, and Jewitt had to do all he knew to bring him out sound for subsequent engagements. After winning the National he went hopelessly in one hind fetlock joint.

Zoedone, ridden by her owner, Count Kinsky, a good man across country, won in 1883. She was a clever fencer, but could not gallop fast enough to keep herself warm.

Then in 1884 and 1885 came "Teddy," Wilson's brace of triumphs. In October 1883, at a sale of Lord Rosebery's "rubbish" at Newmarket, Voluptuary, by Cremorne out of Miss Evelyn, was knocked down at 150 guineas to the bid of Mr. E. P. Wilson, and the horse never ran in public over a country until he faced the starter for the Grand National of the following spring. With the Shipston-on-Stour horseman on his back, he never put a foot wrong all the way, and cantered in a very easy winner. The last piece of work I saw the old horse perform was "tittuping" across the stage at Drury Lane Theatre. Rather an inglorious finish for a National winner!

That year The Scot (belonging to the Prince of Wales) started favourite, but had bad luck, and galloped into a fence; whilst old Frigate—who did the trick at last in 1889 after many a meritorious failure—was second, and that very shifty gentleman Roquefort (Captain "Brummy" Fisher's) finished third. Soon afterwards Roquefort was sold by auction for 1250 guineas, and left Mr. Arthur Yates's place at Alresford, to be put under the charge of Mr. E. P. Wilson.

The weak spot about Roquefort's temper was a rooted aversion to going straight on a right-handed course. Liverpool being a left-handed one, his trainer hoped he would give his true running, and not try to bolt out. As a matter of fact, Roquefort, although he nearly got knocked down at one fence, ran his race gamely throughout and won, poor old Frigate again being second. It was said by good judges at the time, and after-events proved to a great extent that they were right, that "it was no good buying Roquefort unless you bought Teddy Wilson with

him," for nobody else seemed to understand how to ride this good but eccentric horse.

Old Joe was essentially of the slow, staying "hunter" type, and had not a very good field to tackle when he won in 1886. Gamecock, an immense favourite with *oi polloi*, took the race the following year, and then Tom Cannon sent out a winner, in Playfair, from the famous stable at Danebury in 1888.

As I before said, Frigate's turn to win came at last. She was a wonderfully clever fencer, never made mistakes, and could stay, at her own pace, for a week. The mare was very wiry, but a bit too light, apparently, to be in the very first class. Ilex was a good horse, but "no catch" to train, and never (speaking from memory) did any good after winning the Liverpool. Come Away again put the Irish on good terms with themselves in 1891, and, caught at his best, he was an out-of-the-common good horse. Captain (now Major) E. R. Owen rode his first Grand National winner in the queer-tempered little Father O'Flynn, which had not long before

been sold out of the Marquis of Cholmondeley's stable. He has changed hands pretty often in the course of a somewhat chequered career, and has the credit of having beaten this year's Grand National hero, Wild Man from Borneo, in November 1893, in the Jolliffe Steeplechase, on which occasion he was ridden by his present owner, Mr. Cecil Grenfell, a capital man between the flags, as he is at cricket, fencing, and racquets.

Why Not is a game little horse that thoroughly deserved his victory in 1894. He was jointly owned by Mr. Jardine and Mr. Charley Cunningham—the latter a splendid horseman, though full tall for a jockey—and, ridden by him, ran a good second at Liverpool as far back as 18 . This year he again ran extremely well, and finished in the first half-dozen.

Beyond all cavil, Cloister has proved himself the champion cross-country performer of the age—perhaps of any age—for on the day that he simply squandered his field in the Grand National of 1893, winning with 12 st.

7 lbs. on his back, what weight would horses of the Lottery and Gaylad type have been likely to concede him successfully? Is it not quite likely that, but for going amiss, he might have made that solitary Grand National victory into a triple crown, all the weight notwithstanding? He was owned, in turn, by Captain Orr-Ewing and Lord Dudley, before passing into possession of his present owner, Mr. C. Duff. I remember walking down to the post at Sandown to witness the start for the Grand Military, and looking over the great son of Ascetic—whose mission in life seems to be the getting of first-rate steeplechase horses — and the magnificent Bloodstone, and thinking that the country might well be proud of such a couple. Two grander horses it would be a puzzle to find anywhere, and they were as good as they were good-looking. Cloister has won the Grand Sefton Steeplechase on two occasions, and is always seen at his best on the Aintree course. In November 1894, with the hunting weight of 13 st. 3 lbs. on his back, he

won this race (the Grand Sefton) in a canter by twenty lengths, beating such good-class horses as Midshipmite, Ardcarn, Fanatic, and Leybourne. The extraordinary seizures—which seem to be something akin to paralysis—to which the horse is subject have doubtless robbed him of victory on more than one occasion, unfortunately.

Mention of Cloister reminds me—and, *par parenthèse*, I may say that when you are writing on this subject one thing brings to mind another in such a way that the difficulty is to know how to leave off!—of another horse belonging to Mr. Duff; I believe the first he ever owned, old Edward, by King Alfred (who, it well be remembered, ran second to Blue Gown in the Derby). The horse was twelve years old when Mr. Duff bought him from Mr. Arthur Yates, and after that he won over twenty races, and was running up to the age of fifteen—truly a "useful slave."

Whilst riding one of this order some years ago, which had certainly not been "eating the bread of idleness," he made a mistake

and came down half a mile from home, and, thoroughly pumped out, lay without making an effort to rise. I escaped without a scratch, and was taking hold of the horse's bridle to try and get him on his feet again, when a voice from the crowd exclaimed—

"Let 'im alone, guv'nor. It ain't orfen as 'e gits a rest; let 'im lie down while 'e can, *unless you've a-goin' to run 'im agen in the next race!*"

From time to time I have ventured to point out, in different publications, two or three matters which I think are mainly accountable for the present depression in the steeplechasing world. I prefer to use the word depression to decadence: I believe, and, as an enthusiastic lover of the sport, fervently hope, that this state of things is only temporary. One of the stumbling-blocks to the farmer who breeds and breaks, and to the hunting-man who owns, horses smart enough to try conclusions with others over a steeplechase course, is the artificial character of the fences, and particularly of that wretched

travesty of a fair hunting jump, the guard-railed ditch. Most of the people who have opened the floodgates of their wrath upon me for thus abusing the "open grave" have, I honestly think, misunderstood my meaning. It is altogether begging the question to exclaim, "Surely you don't object to a ditch on the take-off side of a fence?" Of course nobody objects to such an obstacle. But the "grave" is *not* a ditch; it is a long, sharply-cut trench, with no natural growth to warn a horse of what he has to do. At a Hunt meeting in the Midlands some years ago I assisted in marking out the course, and in a fine line of stiff hunting country, we were enabled to get in two big ditches, or, to be quite accurate, one ditch and one small brook, both on the take-off side of stout thorn fences. No guard-rail was placed before either, and with just upon fifty horses running—not one from a training stable—we had not a single fall, or even blunder, at either of them. No, it just comes to this, that if natural ditches can be obtained in the course no objection

could be raised to them; if they cannot be found, for Heaven's sake don't attempt to manufacture them. A fence you can "copy" with fair success, but until a ditch has been made for a number of years, it *will* look like a sawpit.

Upon this subject the present editor of the *Sporting Life*—and no keener lover of cross-country sport, nor finer judge of it, exists—writes: "Surely it is not out of the way to appeal to the members [of the National Hunt Committee] to consider at the next meeting this question of the regulation ditch. What is it they are waiting for? If it is for signs of the natural disinclination of horses to take such an obstacle, evidence is supplied them at every meeting in the land. If it is for the dangerous nature of the fence, let them set their clerks on a compilation of the accidents that occur through its existence—accidents too often fatal, both to horse and man. . . . Farmers, breeders, hunting-men, all have written in one strain of deadly opposition to it."

The other point I wish to call attention to is not of such importance to the well-being of the sport as the question of the regulation ditch, but it certainly is of sufficient gravity to demand attention. I refer to the present rule as to the qualification of riders, and the way it works out in practice. Officers of the Army and Navy, and members of certain well-known clubs, are most properly admitted to ride as amateurs, without further qualification. But why stop there? Surely a Barrister, a Doctor of Medicine or of Civil Law, any man who has taken a degree at a recognised university, and many others whom one need not more particularly specify here, should be as eligible to ride as officers of the two Services? And there must be "something rotten in the State" when we are treated to the daily sight of trainers, men, half-professional jockey, half-groom, and others of the same kidney, riding as amateurs. I have personally known several men debarred from riding, because as members of "learned" professions they dared not put themselves up for election

as qualified riders for fear that some Mawworm or Stiggins should find it out, and do them some injury in the business by which they earn their daily bread.

## II

Amongst that far too numerous class of "the little birds that can sing and won't sing" must be ranked Sir John Astley's Scamp, who won the big hurdle race at Croydon, and seemed cut out for a high-class steeplechaser. But beyond scrambling over—or more often still, knocking down—the hurdles, he wouldn't have jumping at any price, but he did "Jolly Sir John" a turn here and there whilst trained by Fothergill Rowlands, at Pitt Place, Epsom. Even that past master of the jumping art, Mr. Arthur Yates, could not make Scamp take to cross-country work.

Talking of Mr. Yates, it may fairly be said that probably no man living has had such a varied experience, both of riding and training jumpers, as the Master of Bishop's Sutton.

Through sheer ill-luck he has never known the joys of victory in Aintree's big race, but of all other coveted prizes in the steeplechase world he has had his share and a bit over. I never met a man who had a word to say against him, and I don't believe he has an enemy in the wide world. One incident in connection with his good-nature well illustrates "what manner of man" he is. Riding down to the post for a steeplechase, he turned to a man whom he hardly knew at all, and asked him if he had remembered to weigh out with a penalty the horse had recently incurred? As a matter of fact, the circumstance of the penalty had been clean forgotten, and the startled rider was at his wits' ends to know what to do.

"Never mind," said Mr. Yates kindly, "hurry back and get your weight right, and I'll ride on and explain matters to the starter." It is almost sad to relate that having returned to the post, with the penalty up, he won the race, his kindly mentor being second.

Harvester; Congress, a grand-looking horse

that ought to have won the Liverpool; Scarrington, of whom the same words might be used; Scots Grey; Master Mowbray; Schiedam; Phryne; the "bolter" Royalist; Messager, winner of the big 'chase at Croydon, when owned by old Jack Percival, then living at Marden Park, and ridden by Gregory, a wonderfully hard bit of stuff; Despatch, who always galloped "sky-scraping" fashion, and never *seemed* to look at his fences; Ryshworth, second for the Liverpool in Disturbance's year; Marin; Snowstorm; and Footman—all these were very useful 'chasers, which I remember running about the country some twenty odd years ago.

Early in the 80's H.R.H. the Prince of Wales owned a good class 'chaser in The Scot, by Blair Athol, a wonderfully handsome chestnut horse with a lot of white markings about him. He was not of much use on the flat, but turned out a really fine cross-country performer, securing amongst other events the Great International Steeplechase at San-

down, and the Great Metropolitan on the old Croydon course in 1881, steered by Mr. Arthur Coventry. I do not think the Prince bought him until after this (the horse originally belonged to Mr. Mackenzie of Kintail), but he was in the Royal stables when started for the Grand National of 1884, and was made favourite. He was trained and ridden by John Jones of Epsom, but fell when going strongly. A remarkably good performance on the part of The Scot was his safely getting the big course at Liverpool, and finishing in the first five, when only four years old. Fred Webb, the famous flat race jockey, rode him, and showed that he was as much at home across a stiff country as he is over the Rowley mile.

Chimney Sweep, who lived and died in Jones's charge, was a wonder at jumping, and Jones told me that the old Sweep had never made a mistake but once in his patriarchal career; he was nineteen years old when he died. He seemed to me in dropping his forefeet over a fence exactly

like a cat jumping off a high wall. What a conveyance for Liverpool! He gave Jones some nice easy rides in his time, and simply loved jumping. Here was another that deserved to win a Grand National, but never got nearer than second.

For make and shape, coupled with extraordinary weight-carrying power, few better 'chasers than The Sinner (by Barabbas) and Roman Oak (by Ascetic) have been seen by the present generation of race goers. The Sinner seemed equally good on the flat or over a country, and was as easy to ride as a pony. The horse had been ridden regularly to hounds by a lady before being put to steeplechasing. He has won an extraordinary number of good races, mostly with Mr. "Denny" Thirlwell, who was "one of the best" in the saddle. The last time I ever saw The Sinner run was at Croydon in March 1887, where he beat Count Kinsky's crack, St. Galmier, a real "nailer" at two and three miles, with the greatest ease. The Honourable George Lambton, a beautiful

horseman, who now has a useful string of horses in training at Newmarket, rode St. Galmier, and although unsuccessful on this occasion, the famous amateur had all the best of it at the meeting, riding his own mare, Bellona, to victory in the Grand International Hurdle, and winning the Great Metropolitan Steeplechase, four miles, the next day, on Sir W. Throckmorton's Phantom. In the first-named race particularly, he rode a masterly finish.

Roman Oak was owned by Mr. W. Leetham when, in 1890, he made his appearance at the Grand Military meeting at Sandown, and won the Hunt Cup, ridden by Mr. Leetham himself. After this he crossed St. George's Channel, and won the Irish Grand Military at Punchestown. He ran second for the big Manchester event, giving a stone and a half to the winner, Dominion, and was then weighted at twelve stone for the Liverpool. He was not successful there, and the distance, four and a half miles, was avowedly too long for him. The following day, however, ridden

by Mr. W. Beasley—whose sad death I have already alluded to—he beat old Gamecock easily enough. After one or two more unsuccessful appearances, Roman Oak, who had now become the property of Sir H. de Trafford, ran in the Irish International Steeplechase, and, well ridden by "Roddy" Owen, won in a canter. From that time he seemed to get on the down grade, but at his best he was a really great horse, and quite a notable figure amongst 'chasers of his time.

Amongst bygone celebrities mention ought not to be omitted of old Medora, who won some nice races in her time, and took three steeplechases within a week when in her fifteenth year. And it was only in 1894 that Parasang, then owned and ridden by Mr. Percy Tippler, won a steeplechase at the mature age of *seventeen*. It really is wonderful how long some of them last. Old Breach of Promise was another of the same sort. Robert l'Anson had always to hustle him along to get the stiffness out of his limbs

when he emerged from the saddling paddock, but the old chap could move to a fair tune when he got warm, and won a lot of small chases. And to come down to more recent times, Gamecock, who won the Liverpool in 1887, and the old grey Champion, have done yeoman's service for their owners. Never was a horse more aptly named than the former, for courage and gameness were the secret of many of his wins. Champion is now nearly white, and is an immense favourite with racegoers. The British public always loves a good horse; and Mr. W. Hope-Johnstone has had the gratification of sharing the old fellow's many successes, having been on his back, I believe, every time he has won.

Of "soldier riders," some of the best were Captain Harford, "Driver" Browne of the Gunners (killed on the railway at Sandown), Lord Charles Innes Kerr, Major Dalbiac, who I am delighted to see has just got into Parliament, Mr. Hope-Johnstone, Captain Annesly, and "Curly" Knox, who rode King

Arthur, the winner of the Grand Military at Rugby seven and twenty years ago. The army can also claim such "good men and true" in the present day as Major E. R. Owen; Sir Cuthbert Slade, who has steered Captain Michael Hughes's Alsop in most of his successful races; Major Fisher; Captain Bewicke (who, if the racing reports are to be believed, is "Captain" one day and "Mr." the next!); Mr. Beevor, R.A.; Captain Walter Beevor, Scots Guards, who at one time trained and rode for Mr. Harry MacCalmont, M.P., the owner of Isinglass; Mr. F. B. Atkinson, late 5th Lancers; Major Crawley, who rode this year's Grand Military winner, Mr. Eustace Loder's Field Marshal, a rare good-looking horse, with a crest like a stallion's—Field Marshal, by the way, came past the post second, Athlumney galloping in ahead. Unfortunately, however, for Mr. Lawson the horse forgot to bring his jockey home with him. Captains Ricardo, Barry, Yardley, and Paynter, Major Carter, Captain Ferrar, and Mr. Murray-Threipland have all been seen

to advantage "between the flags." Amongst prominent "soldier owners" are to be found Captain Michael Hughes, of the 2nd Life Guards; Mr. H. L. Powell, R.H.A.; Mr. G. C. Wilson, R.H. Guards, who won the Grand National with Father O'Flynn; Captain Whitaker, late 5th Fusiliers, whose plucky purchase of Ormerod for 3000 guineas was so promptly rewarded by the horse winning the Grand Military for him; Mr. Baird; Captain Fenwick; Mr. Eustace Loder, 12th Lancers; Captain Orr-Ewing, 16th Lancers; and Lord Shaftesbury, 10th Hussars.

Few men in recent years have been blessed with two smarter steeplechase horses in a very small stud than Mr. H. L. Powell, with the magnificent Bloodstone and Midshipmite. Horses, it is truly said, run in all shapes, and whereas the last named is a plain horse, although a well-made one, with rather "up-setting" action in front, Bloodstone was a veritable picture, and when galloping a realisation of the poetry of motion. Mr. Powell bought him from the ill-fated "Bay"

Middleton — I think in 1889 — and with "Roddy" Owen up, he won for him, amongst several other races, the Grand Military Hunters' Steeplechase at Sandown. After being sold to Lord Dangan (now Earl Cowley) he was pulled out for the Mammoth Hunters' Steeplechase at Sandown, and ridden again by Captain Owen, won a desperate race by a short head. An objection followed on the ground of boring, which was overruled. For my own part, I am bound to say—though my sympathies and interests were all the "other way"—that I thought Bloodstone did interfere very considerably with the second horse. He was extraordinarily speedy, and a very safe and quick fencer. But he had this peculiarity, that he must be ridden amongst his horses; neither in front nor behind. His fancy was to always form one of the cluster in the front rank. He won many races, and seemed equally good over a country at hurdle racing, or on the flat in hunters' races. Gatland trained him at Alfriston, and both at home and in public his jumping was bold and

clean, until he met with an unlucky fall in a race by tumbling over a prostrate horse in front of him. For many a day after that he was so nervous that he could not be depended on at his fences, but confidence gradually returned, and he forgot the *contretemps*. Bloodstone was one of the 124 horses competing for the twenty-nine Queen's Premiums at the Agricultural Show in March 1895, and deservedly obtained an award. A more beautiful and bloodlike horse I never saw, added to which he was, whilst on the Turf, a performer of the highest class, and almost invincible over three miles, which was his favourite distance. Captain (as he was then) Owen rode him every time he won, if I may trust my memory; and *àpropos* of the gallant Fusilier, I think he will be as much amused if he sees this as I was in overhearing it. Two cross-country trainers were praising his prowess in the saddle, and one of them informed the other that he (Captain Owen) had had fever, been in action and got wounded, all since the day he came home

triumphantly, at Aintree, on the queer-tempered little Father O'Flynn.

"Has he, now? you don't say so. And they couldn't kill the little devil, even with all that, eh?" answered the other.

It is rather a noteworthy circumstance that the three judges officiating at the show just named were all men who had ridden in the Liverpool Grand National—Mr. "Pussy" Richardson, who rode Disturbance and Reugny to victory in successive years; Mr. Danby, who was on Pluralist in 1847, when that good horse fell early in the contest, but lost so little time that he finished less than 150 yards behind Matthew, the winner; and Mr. Charley Cunningham, who steered Why Not into second place as far back as 1889. What a wonderful little horse the last-named has proved himself. He has run consistently well at Liverpool, on which severe course he always seems a stone better than elsewhere; and not the least of his remarkable performances was in the National of 1895, where, with twelve stone up, he was always

in the front rank, and finally carried Mr. Guy Fenwick into fifth place; this son of Castlereagh and Twitter was then fourteen years old.

If the ages of hunters could always be ascertained, I suspect some of us would be astonished to find what veterans we were on. I suppose that few "antiquities" could be found to beat Ingle-go-Jang, winner of many hunters' 'chases and Point to Point events in times past, and an admirable "fox-" catcher, who is still hunted by Major Carter, R.A., in Essex, although his years number those of a quarter of a century.

To return to Mr. Powell's two good 'chasers. Bloodstone should now be as serviceable at the stud as he has been on the Turf; and it would be a difficult matter to find any horse better calculated for getting hunters of the highest type. Breeders should also bear in mind that he is a grandson of Touchstone.

Midshipmite is a horse of quite another colour, literally and metaphorically speaking. My first introduction to him was rather a

strange one. I was riding in a gallop with the Royal Artillery draghounds, and crossing Lamerby Park I noticed a big, leathering, young bay pegging along in front, until on reaching the stiff flight of rails which guarded a big ditch on the far side he charged them, was caught by the top bar, and turned head over heels into the ditch. There he lay, feebly waving all four legs in the air, and two or three of us, as we slipped off our horses to lend a hand, thought that it was a case of a broken back.

"And I gave £800 for him last week," said his owner (who was then Whip to the drag) to me, in calm tones, as we assisted to turn the animal over and get him "right side up." That horse was Midshipmite, then three years old, and seeing hounds for the first time in his life. What he has accomplished since is now a matter of Turf history; Gatland broke the horse in, and trained him for most of his earlier engagements. He used to fall sometimes two or three times a week on the jumping ground at Alfriston, but before he

ever won a race I remember Mr. Powell saying, "This young horse will make me another Bloodstone"—words of prophecy, indeed.

One of his first efforts in public was on the old Croydon course. For the honour and glory of the Royal Artillery Drag we backed him, and the bookmakers, I remember, laid us nice healthy prices, for the young Torpedo horse was doing a bold thing in tackling Cameronian on the flat, the latter being at that time almost invincible. Our joy was correspondingly great when we saw the young one sticking to the favourite all the way up that tiring hill, and finally beating him. Midshipmite is a very big jumper, and of his many riders none handled him so well as poor "Billy" Sensier, though the horse ran very well in the Liverpool under Mr. Atkinson's able guidance. On that occasion he overjumped himself, after getting four miles of the journey, some say "pumped out," and others, including, I believe, his jockey (who ought to know),

"full of running." In 1893 he finished in the first five at Aintree, with Sensier on his back; and just previously to that he had won the Grand Military in magnificent style, Captain Burn-Murdoch riding, and riding him very well, too, for he is not "everybody's money" to pull together at his fences. At the water, the last time round, he made a tremendous leap, which I much wish had been measured. From that point he had everything dead settled, and came in practically alone.

A week after Wild Man from Borneo had proved his excellence by winning the Grand National at Liverpool I found myself in Eastbourne, and hacking over the breezy South Downs, passed through Jevington, and arrived in time for some excellent roast beef at the quaint old "Star," situate in the equally quaint village of Alfriston. In the afternoon I was taken to see the "Wild Man" in his box, "with all his blushing honours thick upon him." Hard and wiry as he looked—his golden chestnut

coat laying as close, smooth, and silky, as though the month had been July instead of April, trained to perfection as he was, and, indeed, must have been, in order to accomplish his stupendous task—I must confess that he did not "fill the eye" as a victor in the greatest steeplechasing struggle of the world. In the stable he looks hardly big enough for the work, and is certainly no weight-carrier. But I have his trainer's authority for saying that the horse did a preparation which, in point of severity, would have broken down anything except either the Wild Man himself or a traction engine. Mr. Gatland is wise in his generation, and when he turns out a horse to run in a big 'chase, that horse, depend upon it, is not only fit, but can jump the course. The Liverpool hero has a wonderfully lean, clever-looking head, with that unerring sign of brain power, great width between the eyes. On his side was still visible the "one" which Mr. Widger had to administer, left-handed, just as the horse cleared Cathal in the final

run home. From his box we proceeded to that in which Waterford was unconcernedly resting his stately frame. This great banging bay, looking a Grand National horse all over, would have taken his own part in the contest had not the death of his owner, just a fortnight before the race, prevented his starting. Both these horses are magnificent fencers in private, and, barring those mishaps to which all horseflesh is liable, it might fairly be said of them that they never fall.

Snaplock—a very corky-looking gentleman in the stable—and two or three more, useful ones, and that win in their turn, were briefly visited, before I was conducted into as charming a little house as one could picture, faced by a large wooden veranda, where Mr. Gatland smokes his cigar, and dreams of Liverpool winners, past, present, and to come. Once inside the door, my eyes were quickly glued to the numerous good pictures of equine heroes who have brought fame and fortune to their clever trainer. But a sea-mist began to show itself, the afternoon waned; and as I

have a positive genius for losing myself in any country, it struck me that to order my hack and gallop back across the downs before it got either darker or more misty would be my wisest course, so with a farewell to my host off I set, and after missing the track twice, and riding plump into a straw-rick in the sea-fog, reached Eastbourne in safety again.

Cathal, who ran second to the "Wild Man" this year for the Liverpool, commenced his jumping career, in a very mild way, in Ireland. He ran four times, and won thrice, in his initial season, but these were only "twenty-five pounder" stakes. Fanatic beat him very easily, and the late Duke of Hamilton's horse is hardly to be described as a flyer. The following year he came to grief whilst running in the Conyngham Cup, after winning the Dunboyne Plate at the Ward Union meeting. In November 1894 he made his bow to an English public at Aintree, and won the Valentine Steeplechase very easily from Ballyohara, giving away 7 lbs., and was sold

afterwards to Mr. F. B. Atkinson (in whose colours he ran for the Grand National) for a thousand pounds. Escott trained and rode him, and after jumping on to the race-course, the two Sussex-schooled horses had the rest of the fight to themselves, Alfriston just beating Lewes in the run home.





# STEEPLECHASE RIDING

Nimrod, writing of Mr. Meynell's reign in Leicestershire, tells us that it was in that great sportsman's day that "the hard riding, or we should rather say, quick riding to hounds which has ever since been practised was first brought into vogue. The late Mr. Childe, of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire—a sportsman of the highest order, and a great personal friend of Mr. Meynell—is said to have first set the example . . . and the art of riding a chace may be said to have arrived at a state of perfection quite unknown at any other period of time." Doubtless this increased pace in "the art of riding a chace" it was that first turned men's thoughts in the direction of steeplechasing. We all remember that now historic *mot:* "What fun we might have if it wasn't for these d——d hounds!"

If some good fairy would come down to earth, and appearing before a young man about to embrace the delightful, if perilous, pursuit of steeplechase riding; if the fay were to offer him the choice of many gifts for his protection, unhesitatingly would I counsel him to take the gift of coolness. Not that coolness is, in itself, by any means "the whole armour of light," but that without it all other qualities, such as pluck, good judgment, seat, and hands, are rendered almost nugatory. The plucky rider without discretion, the man whose seat and hands are undeniable, but who is apt to get in a flurry the moment he finds himself in difficulties, had better "be wise in time," and refrain from trying his luck and perilling his neck by riding between the flags. One can hardly go through the hunting season without seeing Courage take a man into many a "tight place," and Coolness bring him out of it with credit.

Another most important part of the equipment of a steeplechase rider—one that is

very generally overlooked too—is strength. A man who has never ridden in steeplechases can have no idea of the immense expenditure of muscular and nervous force by a jockey riding a hard race. To be in hard condition is a prime necessity for a steeplechase jockey, and even then the wear and tear is such that only a sound constitution will enable a man to support these constant demands upon his strength. The power of calling up these forces instantly and constantly is, perhaps, the best definition I can give of being "strong on a horse."

Fred Archer was a very delicate man, and, generally speaking, unable to stand even the exertion of a long walk, but very few have ever shown more power on a horse than he. Of all his contemporaries, I should be inclined to think that only Custance and Fred Webb were as strong horsemen as the shadowy, frail-looking jockey, whose mighty "finishes" delighted the racing world for over a decade. Custance and Webb, by the way, are both splendid men across country.

Memories of riding one's first steeplechase are, I should say, hardly satisfactory ones as a rule. Nor is this to be wondered at. The whole of the surroundings are strange to us, the noise of the race-course, the rush of the horses at their fences, the *increased pace* above that required for hunting, and the anxiety to win—all these things and a dozen others that do not occur to me at the moment of writing tend to confuse and agitate one. And, again, the novice is presumably very young, perhaps only a boy, and in such case the nerves are peculiarly susceptible and liable to easy disarrangement. Half-a-dozen rides in public will probably cure all this, but those half-dozen are hardly pleasurable ones to the generality of beginners. Such experiences might be mostly set to the music of "'E dunno where 'e are!"

One of the worst dangers, in my humble opinion, is that of collision, and everybody knows what a little thing in that line suffices to "upset the apple cart." It is always, therefore, good policy to jump even the

highest place in a fence rather than follow in the general scramble for the weak spot. Even if actual collision is avoided, you may, whilst in mid-air, find something down in front of you, and in a crowded field it is often best, if you are on a fairly safe fencer, to push along in front, and so get out of the way of the fallers and refusers. At the same time, we can't all expect to get Robert Nightingall's luck, when, on one occasion in a field of twenty, he fell when leading, and never got touched by any of the odd nineteen!

We all know that, in the case of a steeplechase accident, there is one thing which is even better than "presence of mind," and that is "absence of body"; but when, in most of the "tight places" a man gets into, neither of these good things is available, the consequences are apt to be disastrous; and anent the subject of absence of mind I heard a story, some years ago, of a north-country Curate, a very absent-minded man, though a good sportsman, who wanted badly to go to ——

Races, but dared not for fear of his Bishop, who was then staying in the town. In an inspired moment he conceived the idea of blacking his face and going as a nigger minstrel. All went well with the scheme until, just in front of the Stand, he came face to face with a large benevolent-looking old gentleman, the Bishop himself! In complete forgetfulness of the aid which burnt cork had lent to his toilet, the absent-minded Curate raised his hat, disclosing his fair and curly locks to the horrified Episcopal gaze! And even this case of clerical absence of mind was fairly capped by the following story, to the truth of which I can absolutely pledge myself. The Curate in question had been invited by some friends to dine, and meet his Bishop. In due course he arrived, late in the winter afternoon, and was shown up to his room to dress. The dinner hour came, but the Curate did not. The hour, but not the man! All the guests, including the great ecclesiastic, were assembled; the minutes slowly passed, but still no sign. At length the host despatched

a servant up to the young man's room to announce that they were all waiting for him. Then the murder was out. The absent-minded one had undressed and gone to bed!

A good story is told of a certain professional steeplechase jockey and a (?) gentleman rider who must both (perforce, and the law of the libel) be nameless here. There were four or five starters only for a steeplechase on the old Eltham course. Through falls and refusals all of them were out of the race, half a mile from home, except these two. The "Pro." was leading, and kept anxiously looking round for his solitary antagonist, who made no sign of "coming along."

At last the horrible idea dawned upon each, that the other was not "on the job."

"Go on, sir, my horse is stone beat!" cried out the "Pro."

In a flash, a bright inspiration came into the amateur's mind.

"By Jove! I've slipped off!" he exclaimed, and "suiting the action to the word," as

the story-books say, down he went, over his horse's shoulder, leaving the wretched man in front to go on and win, *nolens volens*.

## II

As instancing the calm and beautiful way in which some owners expect you to risk your life for the "honour and glory" of the thing and their peculiar benefit, I may mention a case that happened to me at a Hunt Steeplechase meeting some years back. I was just getting "clothed and in my right mind" after riding in the first race, when an excited gentleman whom, to the best of my belief, I had never even seen before in my life, came up to me and said—

"My jockey has failed me, and I've got two horses running here this afternoon. Will you ride for me?"

I asked which they were, and he told me. Then with the utmost *sang-froid* he added—

"I don't think, as a matter of fact, that

either will get over the course. I should think both—I'm certain one—will fall!"

I "passed."

An old hand once said to me after I had been knocked down by another horse refusing in a steeplechase, "Why did you go at it (the fence) to the left hand of ——?" mentioning the refuser's name. "You knew how uncertain he was at his fences."

"Yes, but how could I tell which way he was going to run out?" I replied.

"Nine horses out of ten whip round to the left, because you carry your flail in your right hand. You should have been where I was, on the right hand side of him," was the answer.

The loss of a stirrup-iron is a thing of frequent occurrence in steeplechase riding, and though we ought all to be able to get over the fences comfortably without them, "finishing" is quite a different matter, and the loss a severe one. Besides this, if the iron is a biggish one, and we have "weighed out fine," it may mean disqualification. But if it has

merely slipped off the foot, a judicious kick with the toe turned very much inwards will often recover it.

I don't think much of either whip or spur as a means of increasing speed in a horse, either across country or on the flat. Many a race has been lost by the injudicious use of one, or both; and were it not for a wholesome dread of the law of libel, I would give an instance of this, which occurred in the Cesarewitch, not very many years back, to a horse I frequently rode myself. Archer, who was close up with the leaders at the finish, was my authority for saying that the horse must have won by five or six lengths, instead of being beaten, but for the jockey picking up his whip "to win with a flourish." The stable was nearly £9000 "out" over that whip mark! On returning to scale, the jockey immediately excused himself and blamed his horse for being "ungenerous" in stopping.

"And if he hadn't stopped, *I* should have blamed him for being a d——d fool!" answered his trainer, looking straight at the

young man in question. It was the last time he was troubled to ride for that stable. Unless a horse is of sluggish disposition and really will not gallop until made to do so, whip and spur would be better left at home in nine cases out of ten. What is the use of flogging a horse who, in the pure spirit of emulation, is trying his hardest to win? It shortens his stride, and finally so disgusts him, that he either "runs cunning," or cuts racing altogether. Far more can be done by riding him with your hands and (unarmoured) heels. Although I shall be accused of heterodoxy in so saying, I assert positively, that whips and spurs should be carried and worn rather as the exception than the rule. One of such exceptions is where a little fellow like Tommy Loates has to ride a great leathering horse such as Isinglass. Big horses are very hard for small jockeys to "get out" unless with the adventitious aid of whip or spur. There was a good story going the rounds about Mr. MacCalmont's pet jockey some time ago. He was being

weighed out for a race in a faded dirty-looking "silk," at which Mr. Manning was gazing in some curiosity. Quoth the latter—

"What colour do you call that, eh?"

"Claret, sir," was the answer.

"Claret, eh? Well, there doesn't seem much colour left in it, anyhow."

"Perhaps it's a light dinner claret, sir," promptly responded the redoubtable Tommy.

Knowledge of pace is a thing we may talk or write about for ever, but the school of experience is the only place in which we shall *learn* what it actually means.

"Don't go away, it makes me feel lonely!" said Sam Daniels to the rest of the field one day when he was on that smart horse Reform (by Gunboat out of Untrue). He had got a "steadier" of between twelve and thirteen stone up in a hurdle race, and dared not come along with the others. The lightly weighted ones knew, of course, that their only chance was to "hurry," but as Sam came by, a hundred yards from the finish, he said, "I knew you'd all come back to

me." It was knowledge of pace that made him confident, and told him he need not hurry his horse.

Perhaps no greater example of this invaluable quality has ever been afforded than John Osborne's handling of Lord Clifden, in that memorable St. Leger when the "big horse" was like the "little boat," all astern, until his pilot—who had never bustled him a yard to make up his lost ground—was enabled to collar the leaders close home, and win. Poor George Fordham, who had said he "would eat Lord Clifden, hoofs and all," if he won, was frequently asked by his brother-professionals when he intended to commence the meal.

Robinson, who was on Kilwarlin for the Leger of 1887, also showed great coolness and patience under singularly trying circumstances, for the horse went straight up with him when the flag fell, and at one time he was over a hundred yards behind everything. Loud were the offers to lay 25 to 1 against him in running; but when once he took hold

of his bit, he came along with giant strides, and won by three-quarters of a length.

George Fordham was as near perfection as a race-rider as it is possible to get in this sublunary sphere, and I suppose the worst race he ever rode in his life was the solitary Derby he won on Sir Bevys, on which occasion he came round Tattenham Corner so wide that he lost lengths, and then after taking the lead at the Bell, rode his horse right out to the end, as though hotly pressed, nothing, as a matter of fact, being near him. Contrast that performance with those of the Fordham of old days, the Fordham of the wonderful finishes at Newmarket, when with Tom Chaloner, Custance, Tom French, old John Morris (as good as most of them if he had not been so deaf), *et hoc genus omne*, "he witched the world with noble horsemanship."

Despite the fact that we have now many really sterling jockeys, I almost feel inclined to relapse into the cry of "fogeydom;" *laudator tempores acti.*

Mention of Tom Chaloner reminds me of

that Derby day, now some three and twenty years ago, when he, on Brother to Flurry * —one of Alec Taylor's specially kept dark ones—gave the backers of Cremorne such a terrible fright. The colt had hardly been mentioned in the betting—no one, other than his own connections, seemed even to know of his existence—until the week before the race, when his owner got some money on at 100 to 1. On the morning of the race he generously offered Alec Taylor as much as he liked to take of his own bets, and the trainer told me how much he took over on his own account, but I am sorry to say I have forgotten the amount. All went well in the race until the finish, but Chaloner came too late.

"Poor old Tom; he didn't often make mistakes, but he left it too long that day," said Alec Taylor, when he was telling me the story of the contest. The colt was going great guns as they passed the post, and the mighty Cremorne only beat him by the shortest of heads. They had some good

* Afterwards named Pell Mell.

horses behind them, too, that day—Prince Charlie, the "King of the Rowley mile"; Wenlock, who subsequently won the St. Leger; and Lord Falmouth's Queen's Messenger, to wit.

Amongst the most interesting of latter-day turf celebrities must be classed the late Alec Taylor, of Manton. A greater master of his art never lived than "grim old Alec," as he was called. "Grim" in a sense he might be, but speaking for myself, I can safely say that not only was his grimness never shown to me, but that I always found him one of the cleverest men—entirely apart from his training skill—I ever met. It was my good fortune to stay near Manton, regularly riding the morning gallops each day, for some weeks, in 1888, and every hour I found some fresh amusement and *pabulum* for the mind in Alec Taylor's dry and caustic humour. After the work had been got through one morning, and whilst my arms were still aching from the attentions of the hard-pulling Stourhead, the great trainer invited me to

accompany him round the boxes wherein the yearlings reposed, a large proportion of them being the grey-ticked young Buchanan's. Whilst on the tour of inspection, one of the lads in attendance came into the stable, exhibiting a very fine specimen of what is vulgarly called "a black eye." Taylor's keen optic fixed him at once, and the proprietor of the black eye obviously jibbed under the inspection. He began in a somewhat lame and halting manner to explain—

"I—I had a bit of an accident, sir, last night, sir. I was just a-runnin' into the cottage, sir, and I runned against the doorpost, sir, and—and—and that's how I got this black eye, sir."

Taylor waited patiently for the whole of the explanation; then with an absolutely immovable face, he replied—

"Quite right, Tommy. Always tell the truth, my boy, whatever it costs you," and turning on his heel, he led the way out of the stable, leaving the hero of the overnight "scrapping match" a crushed and withered thing.

On one occasion I was with him when a person of the "sporting gent" order, bolder than most (for it took a bold man to ask Alec Taylor impudent questions!) accosted him with "Morning, Mr. Taylor. Which is it to be for next week's race, the horse or the mare?" alluding to Eiridspord and Rêve d'Or, then being backed for the City and Suburban at Epsom.

I "sat tight" for an explosion, but none came. The master of Manton merely observed—

"Well, should you back Eiridspord if he could give So-and-So a stone over the distance?" and the clever gentleman on the "nod's-as-good-as-a-wink" principle, exclaimed—

"I *should*, Mr. Taylor!" and walked off, highly pleased with the result of his impudent questioning.

"And so should I," drily observed Taylor, as we got out of earshot, "*but he can't!*"

The photograph of the man who succeeded in getting "a rise" out of Alec Taylor would be an unique possession.

Occasionally, too, he could be very severe in his observations. In that phenomenal year, 1887, when the Manton horses were fairly sweeping the board, after having experienced a long spell of adverse fortune—always borne by the Duke of Beaufort without a murmur, a thing which could not be truthfully said of the Duchess of Montrose—the shrewd old trainer was watching the unsaddling of a horse belonging to the latter, which had just won a race at Goodwood, when her Grace came down from the Stand, and shaking hands with Taylor, exclaimed—

"What a wonderful trainer you are!"

"Yes, your Grace—*when I win!*" was the reply.

Whilst I was at Manton, we rode together one morning across the Downs, and Taylor pointed out to me the exact course over which Teddington's wonderful Derby trial took place at dawn of day. Teddington met Storyteller at level weights, gave two stone to Gladiole, 21 lbs. to the Ban, and 6

lbs. to Vatican. He won in a canter, and Taylor naturally looked upon the Derby as over. But there was trouble in store for the colt. A week before the race his off fore-leg filled, and he had to be stopped in his work. The leg fined down all right, but when Teddington got to Epsom, the change of stables and the journey combined upset him, and he declined to feed. However, despite these drawbacks, he made short work of his opponents, and beat the large field of thirty-one with a bit to spare.

To have an eye "all round about you," is an invaluable thing in riding a race. You ought not only to know what your own horse is doing, but be able to form a fairly accurate opinion of how other people's horses are getting on. You may be beat, but that does not so much matter if every other horse in the race is in the same condition. Again, if your most dangerous opponent is at all inclined to "turn thief," you ought to be able to see it, and then go up to him, and never give him a moment's peace. Many a race

has been won that way, when all seemed smooth sailing for the rogue.

Horses are wonderfully quick to find out how far they can take liberties with their fences, and so are some of their riders! One man, who rides almost as many winners between the flags nowadays as anybody, said to me a few weeks back, when we were discussing the relative merits of the Sandown and Kempton obstacles, "Sandown looks the worst of the two, but you can brush through the tops of the fences there. You can't do that at Kempton."

Now, although a horse can't be too good a jumper to win steeplechases, he may be too *big* a jumper to do so. Young or inexperienced animals usually jump a great deal bigger at their fences than they need, and this is a fault—one on the right side, be it always remembered—that practice alone will cure. "It's all right when they rise *high* enough; never mind the rest," said Gatland to me, speaking of the schooling of young horses to jump, and no one can teach the

Alfriston trainer much in his own line of business, as we know. But if an animal jumps much bigger than he need when racing, it is perfectly clear that he will beat himself. As a rule, however, a horse, be he hunter or 'chaser, measures his fence very accurately, and whilst taking care not to hit the top *too hard for safety*, rarely wastes his strength by overjumping an obstacle. Indeed, the close shave some of them will make is calculated to cause the rider to "sit up" a bit on occasions.

One thing that has always been a puzzle to me, is that many a horse which is by no means either a good or a safe hunter acquits himself very much better when running over a Point to Point steeplechase course than he does in following hounds. The fences are, as a general rule, larger, and the pace more severe, and yet I have seen over and over again the indifferent hunter running under these conditions take his revenge on, and fence better than, the horse which has invariably proved his superior as a "fox-catcher."

If anybody has fathomed the mystery, I wish he would publish the solution. And why is it that we not infrequently find a bad hunter make a good 'chaser?

Roughly speaking, in riding a race, if your horse is one of the slow, staying sort, you must go in front and keep there as long as you can; if of the speedy order and deficient in stamina, then you must wait with him and rely upon one effort—which must not be made, on the one hand, too soon, or the "run" will not last him as far as the post; or, on the other, too late, for there the consequences are so obvious as not to need mention. But we ought to make very sure of our facts beforehand, for many a horse that has been merely regarded as a sprinter has shown himself later in life capable of getting long courses; amongst others, Lord Coventry's famous sisters, Emblem and Emblematic, both Grand National winners, for example.

If you could, indeed, have "eyes in the back of your head," you would not find them

at all superfluous in steeplechase riding. A chance to get the rails at the bend for home, the sight of a "dangerous" opponent "pecking," as he lands over a fence—in which case it may be sound policy to push along a bit, so as to give him all the more ground to make up—the chance of getting on a sounder piece of ground than the rest, all these and many more like matters are things to watch for throughout the whole contest. *Apropos* of eyes, Mr. "Johnny" Dormer, who was one of the boldest and best of cross-country riders, sustained a terrible injury (whilst riding Miss Chippendale for the late Duke of Hamilton) which resulted in the loss of an eye. A lady asked him, some time afterwards, whether he intended to continue steeplechase riding, to which he made the smart reply—

"What! with only one eye? I always wanted *three* eyes whilst I was riding."

How sorry we all were when Cloister only just failed to give him the prize he coveted at Liverpool.

So quickly and unexpectedly may the whole aspect of the race be changed, that "instructions" to a competent rider have often proved themselves a very doubtful blessing. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and this is especially true of instructions. A few instances will best illustrate what I mean.

"You are not to go in front on any account whatever." In this race a very crafty gentleman made running, or, to speak more correctly, he "waited in front," that is, that wanting to stop the pace, he just kept going, his horse travelling well within himself, all the time, whilst the rate of progression did not suit the jockey told to wait at all. The latter very well knew that unless he could go up and increase the pace he would assuredly be beaten. Hampered with "instructions," however, he dared not set them at defiance, and thus the race was thrown away.

"Lay right off—never mind what *you* think about it. I don't want to see you

even attempt to come until the corner of the enclosure rails."

Result: At the point indicated the horse comes with one run, and going twice as fast as anything in the race, is beaten half a length! There was not time for him to get up.

"Never mind how hot they try to make it for you, come right through." In strict obedience to orders the rider came right through: the pace was a tremendous one, and his horse was beaten off a hundred yards, when, by regulating his tactics according to surrounding circumstances, things might have been entirely different. At all events, a week later the defeated animal beat his conqueror, and the one that finished third to him over the same distance, and at the same weights, within a pound or two. One more example, and I have finished.

"Don't let me see you in front till you are over the last fence." The horse was a hard puller, and very impetuous at his fences. He was usually sent along in his races, and

always settled down as soon as he had got a lead. After half a mile or so a child could ride him. But the instructions were imperative, and pulling his rider's arms out, fighting like a very demon for his head, he fairly beat both himself and his jockey, and lobbed in an ignominious last.

Do not let it be imagined for a moment that I am saying anything against the broad principle of a trainer or owner ordering how his horse shall be ridden. I have far too high an opinion of the average owner or trainer to think that he is given to making this sort of mistake. All I mean is to point out the inexpediency or, at all events, the risk of strictly tying down a *competent* jockey with cast-iron instructions, and especially where the rider knows the horse and his peculiarities well. As to instructing the average mannikin in flat racing, I suppose that as most of them can neither hold a horse nor ride one, it doesn't really much matter whether you give them orders or not! To see Nature's most beautiful productions in

the equine world butchered along, and their tempers ruined by this class of jockey, always "draws" me considerably! Of course, owners cannot help themselves in the matter on account of the weights, but, oh, the pity of it! If by chance the mannikin does win, it mostly means that his horse has at least 7 lbs. in hand.

*Apropos* of instructions, a most respected trainer for whom I have now and then ridden was an extremely nervous, fidgety man, and rather given to tutoring his riders. Once he had got hold of a very rough specimen of the groom-jockey to ride for him in a steeple-chase, and whilst we were walking down to the post, a bitter March wind chilling one to the marrow at the time, I overheard the following colloquy :—

*Trainer.*—"Now lay off, mind, till you get to the foot of the hill, and——"

*Jockey.*—"Yes, I know; all right."

*Trainer.*—"And you're not to come with him till——"

*Jockey.*—"All right, all right!" (blow-

ing the tips of his blue fingers to warm them).

*Trainer.*—"And mind you keep cool——"

*Jockey* (fairly roused).—"Garn and stuff yourself! 'ow could I keep anything else a day like this!"

I am rejoiced to see that the "powers that be" have now come to allow a 9 st. 7 lbs. minimum in steeplechasing. In a former book, published some eight years ago, I wrote, ". . . I think that at least 7 lbs. might be taken off steeplechasing weights, making the minimum 9 st. 7 lbs. You may own a remarkably smart horse, which is put up in the handicap scale so much, that, although he might stand a fair chance of giving the weight away to the rest, is yet not big and powerful enough to carry 13 st. or 13 st. 7 lbs. three or four miles across country, and then, as in many cases, race up a hill with it to the finish. In my opinion, nothing is gained by putting these crushing weights on a horse, and surely, if it be right for an animal ever to carry them racing, then it would be for a

comparatively short distance on the flat, and not when he has to lift them over big fences, at a time of the year when the ground is almost invariably in a heavy state, and under conditions which make the course two miles in length at the very least." I believe that most owners and trainers will agree that the change has been a beneficial one.

The worst place to fall on the average steeplechase course is at the guard-railed ditch. I have seen horses brought down in all manner of ways at this ridiculous obstacle. I say "ridiculous," because it is not natural to make a steep-sided cutting in smooth turf where no growth gives evidence of what there is to be jumped, erect a foot-high rail in front of it, and then expect a horse to get over that and the fence beyond, unless he has been specially trained to it. No one objects to a *ditch* on the take off side of a fence; it is begging the question when men ask you this. The nicest steeplechase fence I ever rode over was the "ditch fence" on the Brackley course, but then it *was* a ditch, and no guard-rail

was placed there. Many men, both now and for years past, have declined to risk valuable young horses over the "regulation ditch," and thus the sport has suffered, and will continue to suffer, simply because the authorities are so supine or so obstinate that they will go on in their own way, regardless of the best interests of steeplechasing. What was the thing invented for? "To check the pace," is the reply. "Has it done so?" Every one knows that 'chases are run to-day faster than they ever were before.

John Jones, whilst taking me through his stables one day some seven years ago, said, "Oh, the open ditch is nothing very dangerous, if you properly teach a horse to do it." That is just the point: "If you teach a horse to do it." But a steeplechase is not a circus. You don't want a "trick horse;" you want a hunter, and, in my humble opinion, every steeplechase course should contain only hunting jumps, such as require no previous curriculum of the training stable to enable the candidate to do in safety.

Smashing the guard-rail; not seeing the ditch properly, and galloping into it; fright of it causing the horse to take off too soon, and thereby jump into the fence beyond—all these, and many more besides, are the accidents one may look for at this unnatural obstacle. To wind up an argument upon its merits and demerits, a friend of mine once said to me—

"I believe you funk it!"

"I do," was my answer, and I am not at all ashamed to say so.

Beware then, oh neophyte! when coming at this fence; but remember there must be no "sniffing" at it! Come right along and rouse your horse, without hustling him, at it. The man who "rides his horse's head off," is simply bound to come to grief here. Never shall I forget seeing a gentleman rider, sitting very high in his saddle, driving his horse as if he were in the thick of a Derby finish, as he hasted to the ditch. The horse put his toes in the ground and stopped, but not so the gallant gentleman on his back. Without

any effort, nay, without any volition of his own, he sailed gaily through the blue empyrean, absolutely clearing the ditch and merely brushing the fence beyond, as he alighted on *terra firma* once again! Nothing, apparently, could have exceeded his own astonishment at finding himself where he was!

And now for one of the most important parts of the steeplechase rider's equipment, nerve.

Before we reached the mature age of twenty, of course we all scoffingly answered the question of what was want of nerve, in the one word "Funk."

But it is not funk, nevertheless. When we are very young at such pursuits as steeplechase riding, we are, for the most part, so gloriously *ignorant* of the danger, that we rather rejoice at a roll over than otherwise. Later on, when we become alive to the fact that we are engaged in a somewhat risky pastime, the consciousness of it may momentarily unsteady us, and this we call nervousness. One of the boldest and best of

steeplechase riders I ever contended against, told me himself that oftentimes, and especially before the start of a race, he "suffered the tortures of the damned." Now if "funk" had been the true seat of the disease, surely that feeling would have endured until he had landed in safety over the last fence. But it did not. Directly the field was despatched upon its journey all nerve troubles vanished, and he was not only bold, but one of the coolest-headed men I ever saw ride. What is the explanation?

Again, where no question of personal risk enters into one's calculation, as, for example, in riding a race on the flat, why, in the name of all that is wonderful, do we sometimes feel an increased action of the heart, and a sensation of profound wretchedness before mounting? or more extraordinary still, why do we feel it, say at Kempton to-day, and not at all at Sandown to-morrow? Why do we say to ourselves that it is "really time we gave up race riding" this week, whilst in the next we laugh to scorn the idea of resigning the

silk jacket, and swear we have taken a new lease of racing life? These things be hidden mysteries that I think few, if any, have really found the solution of. When analysed, the feelings to which we allude as occasionally the bane of the horseman, resemble those of a swimmer. It is not a sense of danger in either case; it is not a want of courage obviously, for the proposed ordeal is a voluntary one. There is distinct consciousness that a shock has *to be* undergone, that it *will be* undergone, and that afterwards all will be well. But meantime the swimmer stands shivering on the brink, and the horseman trembles. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The moral will triumph over the physical, real courage over nervousness! The plunge once taken, the start once made, brings one a sense of exaltation, that I don't think anything else in the world can produce. One moment of time seems amply sufficient for you to take in the whole situation. You see how your own horse is going; you tell, as though by in-

stinct, which of your opponents you will ultimately have to reckon with just before the judge's little white-painted box is reached. There is no question of "nerves" now! All your energies are concentrated into the one desire to beat your opponents—no matter how, no matter at what personal risk. You feel like a gambler, only more reckless than he—you play not with paltry sovereigns; your stake is life and limb. There is an opening between the horses racing in front of you; a very small one, 'tis true. But you hesitate not a moment, and catching your horse by the head, set your teeth, and ram him through. All but one drop back beaten, and then you set to, head, hands, and heels, to beat the survivor. Amid the most intense excitement, shouting, flying of dust, and cracking of whips, the two of you shoot past the post locked together. A dead heat? No, as you turn, after pulling up your horse, you catch sight of the numbers being hoisted, and your heart gives a great leap when you see your own—the mystic 7—at the top!

When riding a horse that you have reasonable grounds for supposing will fall with you, it is a good plan to leave your spurs behind. They are apt to get crosswise in the stirrup-irons, and hang you up in the event of an upset. Always try to fall away from your horse; that is, if he falls to the left, do you try and fall to the right, and *vice versâ*. Although I have no affection for a whip, it is not without its uses: as when a horse is fencing carelessly; and again, when he seems doubtful in his mind whether to jump or refuse. In Casse Tête's Grand National, Page had to use his whip heavily at the final hurdles to keep the little mare on her legs at all. And if a horse lies too far out of his ground, a judicious "one" may be of service in getting him to go up and join his horses. Again, one or two strokes may be invaluable just at the finish of a race. But to keep on whipping a horse, merely proclaims to everybody that his rider is both a butcher and an ass. These remarks, of course, do not apply to men who regularly

ride their own horses, and know their character and peculiarities thoroughly: no rules need be laid down in such cases.

One of the most important of all things in race riding, whether on the flat or across country, is to take a pull at your horse in order to steady him and get him well back on to his legs for the final struggle. The greatest nicety is required in making your effort, for horses rarely "come" a second time, and if your "run" does not last to the finish you may, generally speaking, drop your hands and give it up as a bad job.

Finally, it is wise not to leave too much ground to be made up at the finish. Distances, like many other things in this wicked world, are deceptive. Above all things, never put yourself in the truly awful position of losing your race after you have got it well won. Think of the Recording Angel's efforts to keep pace with the eloquence of your luckless backers, and never get "caught napping!"

I may just add a few words as to the

danger of steeplechase riding. No one disputes the fact that a certain amount of risk to life and limb is involved. I should be the last to do so. But I do not think it is either so bad as it is painted, or so dangerous as it looks. I have had my fair share of accidents, and have broken ribs, collar-bone, and arm, some two or three times each, and once sustained a slight concussion of the brain, but have never been seriously, that is, dangerously, injured in my life except once, when a horse rolled on me. I suspect we are all pretty tough, and really take a lot of killing. If a man goes in for the sport, he must be prepared to take his falls good-humouredly. They *will* come, even to the best, and the sooner one gets used to the idea the better. Anthony Trollope, one of our few literary sportsmen, once declared that hunting men did not incur so much damage to life and health as they who played whist every afternoon at their club, and ate a heavy dinner afterwards. If we take the number of men who, either hunting or steeplechase-riding,

regularly go across country year after year, and then compare that number with the cases of fatal accident, we shall find the death-rate a very low one. Beside the few cases I have already mentioned, I may just recall that within the last twenty years or so, the Hon. Greville Nugent ("Mr. St. James"), one of the pluckiest little horsemen ever seen—he never weighed eight stone in his life—and Mr. Goodwin have been killed at Sandown; and Lord Rossmore on the Windsor course, while riding Harlequin. Lord Rossmore was too tall for a jockey, though a bold, good horseman; he had been terribly unlucky in getting dangerous falls for some time before his fatal ride. Sandown was also the scene of fatal accidents to Clay, the professional, and to Captain Boyce. It was a remarkable circumstance that Captain Boyce rose from his fall with apparently little injury. He returned to the stand, dressed, and went up to town by train, dined at his club, and a few hours after going to his rooms was suddenly taken ill and expired. A horse called Coercion

fell at the regulation ditch when running at Four Oaks Park (Birmingham), killing Sly who rode him, one of the best conducted young men in his profession. If my memory serves me the horse belonged to Mr. H. Barclay (the owner of the great Bendigo), and it was on Woodhouse, another of the popular brewer's animals, that poor young George Brown — barely twenty years of age — met with his fatal accident this summer (1895) at Brighton. Willy Macdonald, on the flat, and Sensier, in a hurdle race, were both killed through their horses falling and leaving them defenceless on the ground for others to gallop over. Mr. Lamport, of the Royal Artillery, was killed whilst riding a gallop over fences at Epsom four or five years ago, and some time before that Sam Daniels lost his life in schooling the hurdle-racer Thunder.

As to fatal accidents in the hunting-field, there is nothing in the shape of a record, however rough, to refer to. But if there were, I venture to think that they are very few, especially considering the vast number

of people who hunt nowadays, and the not inconsiderable proportion of rash children, inexperienced "City gents," and unutterable "duffers" of every class amongst them.

In concluding this chapter, I may just name some of the prominent horsemen of my time, who have either recently ceased riding, or may still be seen in the saddle. Of course the list does not pretend to be an exhaustive one. Of the amateurs, I would mention Mr. Arthur Yates, Messrs. G. S. Thompson, "Thomas," Peter Crawshaw, Captain "Doggy" Smith, Lord Marcus Beresford, E. P. Wilson, Hon. George Lambton, the present Earl of Minto ("Mr. Rolly"), Majors Fisher, E. R. Owen, Crawley, and Dalbiac; Captains W. B. Morris (killed riding over a small fence in the Cheshire country), "Bay" Middleton (killed in a steeplechase in the Midlands); Messrs. Hope-Johnstone, C. J. Cunningham, Arthur Coventry—now the official starter of the Jockey Club—J. M. Richardson, D. Thirlwell, the Beasleys, the Moores (Garrett and

William), Mr. Brockton, Captains Lee Barber and Beevor.

Of another school are those rare good men the Cheneys; Sir C. Slade, Mr. G. B. Milne, Mr. Cecil Grenfell, Mr. C. Thompson, Mr. Lushington, Lord Molyneux, the Ripley brothers, Mr. "Joe" Widger, Mr. Guy Fenwick, Mr. P. Tippler, Mr. J. Phillips—who has been riding a rare lot of good races on the flat this season, and winning in his turn — Mr. Moncrieff, Mr. Beatty, and Mr. Thursby.

Of the professionals, the following were, or are, well-known and excellent horsemen: Robert l'Anson, James Adams, James Jewitt, J. Jones, Harry Barker, Joe Cannon, G. Williamson, Arthur, William, and Robert Nightingall, Harry Escott, G. Morris, Sam and W. Daniels, Mawson, the Danebury cross-country rider, poor Sensier, and Dollery, both brought up with Mr. Arthur Yates at Bishop's Sutton, and attached to that gentleman's stable.

May I be permitted to say a word or

two in conclusion, which applies equally to riding in silk or scarlet? It is this, that for jumping on to a fallen rider there is absolutely no excuse. Were I to quote five hundred examples of the horrible mischief done in this way, it would add nothing more of weight to the warning than by just mentioning two typical cases, one in years gone by, and another of modern times. A man literally landed over a fence on the top of Squire Osbaldeston, and broke his leg in two or three places; the sufferer barely escaped amputation of the limb as the consequence. The other instance occurred in Northamptonshire, where a lady was the sufferer and another of the same sex the culprit. As we know, this, most unhappily, ended fatally. There is nothing gained by the practice except "a lead." Is it right to jeopardise a human life in order to obtain it?

# HURDLE RACING

## HURDLE RACING

To get a flat-racehorse fit for the business of "timber-topping" is obviously a far easier matter than to prepare him for crossing a country in public. Some animals take to the game so readily, that half-a-dozen visits to the schooling ground will make them well qualified to try their luck in a hurdle race. In fact, on one occasion a friend of mine bought a four-year old out of a selling race —five furlongs—in which he had been third, on the Tuesday, and I rode him in a hurdle race on the Thursday following, and what is more, he gave me a very comfortable ride until the last flight of hurdles but one, where he came down (vulgarly speaking) "a buster." A thoroughbred horse learns very quickly—unless, indeed, he has made up his mind, like several I could name, that jumping doesn't

agree with him; and then, of course, it is a case of "pull devil, pull baker!" as to who shall win the deal. But in the ordinary course of things, your hurdle racer will not take long to prepare if he is only even moderately willing. There are degrees, too, of willingness. Scamp — a horse I have alluded to elsewhere — was quite agreeable to do his best in a hurdle race, although he would gallop hard against three hurdles out of five and knock them down; Quits, on the other hand, was *not* willing to do even this. In fact he was so imbued with Conservatism—he came from Shardeloes!—that he resolutely set his face against the "illegitimate" game altogether, and would have none of it. To begin with — and this, whether you are schooling a horse for hurdle jumping, or getting over a country —a small obstacle, such as a pole laid on uprights dressed up with fresh gorse, and not exceeding three feet in height, should be set up, and the novice "led" over it by a staid and clever jumper. Let him have it as slowly

as he likes, at first; jumping it at full speed will very soon follow when once the youngster's natural nervousness shall have worn off. If the beginner shows a disinclination to jump, a good plan is to ride him by himself over a farm, taking him over very low places, gaps in hedges, small grips, &c., until something like confidence comes to him, then bring him back to your gorse fence again. When he has surmounted this two or three times in safety (and be careful not to make his lessons too long, for fear of disgusting him with the whole business), he may be taken at a low hurdle, with the lead, again, of a good reliable jumper. If his progress is still satisfactory, increase the pace a bit, and let him come fairly up to his fence at galloping pace. But you cannot be too patient with him; if he is nervous or even perverse, you must be good-humoured with him; it is not a bit of use meeting ill-temper with ill-temper; you only make things worse. As Charles Mathews said of "Honesty" being "the best policy," so can

I say that "I have tried both ways, and I know." But always keep this "pasted into your hat." However small the obstacle is, and whether it be hurdles, or pole, or what not, it has got to be *jumped*, not run through or in any way knocked down. Nothing is more mischievous than for a beginner to find that he can do this. Be you very sure that he will take an early opportunity of trying to run through something stiff, such as a stile or post and rails, in which case the horse is sure to finish a poor second to the timber! After he has galloped satisfactorily over three or four flights of low hurdles, you can increase them to the ordinary height which he will have to encounter on the race-course, and a couple of good gallops over these, in the company of two or three more horses to give him confidence, will pretty well fit him for his new business in life.

It should be borne in mind that in a hurdle race a horse must not stop to jump; neither, indeed, may he do so in a modern steeplechase. He ought to gallop right up

to his hurdles, be over and away again as quick as a rabbit. If he "pitches" over, and lands with a jerk, he must inevitably lose ground, as he takes all the "way" off himself, and has to be set going afresh. A horse that jumps too big, again, is sure to "get left" at hurdle racing, as he takes too much out of himself at his fences: this, however, is a fault that most horses soon cure themselves of. In fact, as soon as a horse gets at all beat, whether racing or otherwise, he will, in most cases, be more inclined to run into the opposite extreme and "chance" his fences.

Although to ride in a hurdle race looks at the first blush a less risky thing than steering a horse over the fences, I am not at all sure that it is not, in fact, more dangerous; and I can call to mind several very bad accidents that have happened by collision, horses jumping into their hurdles, others jumping upon a fallen rider, &c. Notably Robert I'Anson's fall on Lord Clive (Sir George Chetwynd's) at Brighton; J.

Page's at Sandown, when Lord Marcus Beresford, who was then starter to the Jockey Club, told me that he had been to see him, and found his head literally split open: how he ever recovered is a marvel; but then Page himself *is* a marvel! Poor Sensier, again, and Sam Daniels both lost their lives over the "sticks."

I remember seeing a comical hurdle race run at Bromley, where a blundering old black mare, named (I think) Queen Bee, made all the running—it was in the old days of "mile and a half over six flights," for the abolition of which our thanks are due to Lord Marcus Beresford—and she knocked down a hurdle at every flight. I don't think we had to jump one! It was on this course, too, that I saw a ridiculous incident, many years ago. One horse kept breaking away at the start, until "the man with the flag" got into a fearful rage, and let out at the jockey of the recalcitrant in no measured terms. I must say I think the rider in question was trying to aggravate him in order to make the rest

laugh. We were about a hundred yards behind the post as the starter kept fuming at us to "Go back; turn round, all the lot of you, and go back!" and all but one—I fancy it was old Dick Shepherd—did go back. That one, however, was standing stock still up at the post, and the starter, being short-sighted, never noticed him. We were "all over the place," and naturally thought the wrathful official would call the "advance guard" back, but suddenly we were electrified by hearing him scream out "Go!" and seeing his flag drop. Away went the man in front like lightning, and no one ever got near him throughout the race!

One of the dangers of hurdle racing—especially when there are a lot of runners, and not too much room at the obstacles—is that your horse's view is obscured, and he consequently takes off a bit late, or, perhaps, too soon. Again, if a refuser suddenly comes right across you, you will be lucky to escape coming down. And here let me pause for a moment to assure my readers that however

rich their vocabulary may, and probably will, be under such circumstances, the flow of language is not half so effectual as a quick snatch at the reins! Nowadays, we get such wonderful "class" horses running in hurdle races, that the old saying of, "Oh, he's useless; put him into a selling hurdle race," has pretty well died out. Chandos, Hesper, Hampton, and Lowlander, a few years back, didn't read like being beaten by the ordinary "leather flapper"; and Stourhead, winner of the Goodwood Stakes; Benburb; Cornbury, winner of this year's Metropolitan at Epsom; Pitcher, and others of the same sort, too numerous for mention here, that have been at the timber-topping trade, would all take some catching by the average "rip," which in times past was wont to find a last "refuge for the destitute" over the sticks.

An incorrigible joker once said to me as we watched the horses gallop on Newmarket Heath—

"There goes one that ought to make a

good hurdle racer," pointing at the time to Charon, a son of Hermit and Barchettina.

In the unsuspicious blush of innocence I asked him why.

"Well," he said, "if Charon can't go across the Styx (sticks), it's a pity!" and this puts me in mind of a smart *mot* in connection with Orme's Derby. Sir John Blundell Maple's Saraband had been freely backed, and report said that he was 10 lbs. better than The Bard. A sporting paper had described him as "a well-furnished colt," and amongst his many backers was a Mr. Shoolbred, who was greatly mortified to find him scratched just a day or two before the race.

"Well furnished, eh?" said a man who had just been talking to the latter; "if ever a colt ought to be well furnished, I should think it's this one, for he's owned by Maple, and d——d by Shoolbred!"

# SOME EQUINE ERRATICS

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"That's a wonderful jumper I've put you on this morning," said a much valued friend of mine, who had mounted me for a gallop with Lord Rothschild's splendid pack of stag-hounds in the happy Vale of Aylesbury; "but he has got a trick of——" He never finished his sentence, as just at that moment away we went, a tremendous field, over a small meadow to a fence with a drop into the lane beyond. On "a wonderful jumper," I suppose, we are all inclined to sit a bit "jolly," and I dare say I was guilty of so doing. To my great astonishment my horse whipped round at the fence—not at all a formidable one—and started for home. I pulled him up, told him mildly, but firmly, that his conduct was decidedly wrong, and took him back to the exact place in the

hedge where he had refused. He jumped it immediately. We had a splendid gallop across the Vale, and he never offered to turn his head from wood or water all the day; in fact, he "jumped as if he loved jumping," as the dealers say. Riding back with my excellent host, and chatting over the run (is it not *the* most delightful chat in the world?), he casually remarked, "I meant to tell you that whenever your horse gets a stranger on his back, he makes a point of refusing the first fence, and trying to bolt home. If he doesn't succeed, *he never tries it again that day.* Last week my cousin rode him, and he refused the first fence, and then took himself off to his stable again."

It was merely an idiosyncrasy, such as many of our best horses, both racers and hunters, possess, and it is, for the most part, the men who don't, or won't, understand these peculiarities that make perfectly harmless horses into ferocious savages. One race-horse likes his own particular cat always with him. Blair Athol was never at rest

without the old grey pony that lived in his box. One horse which I constantly rode declined to be mounted unless I wore a coat over my silk jacket. Another (Lord Waldegrave, by Orlando out of Marionette by Stockwell) would never gallop a yard until the last half-mile of his journey on the training ground, and with his trainer up would not gallop at all! Mr. Bowes's Chivalry so hated Perrin, that he would have savaged him at any moment he could have got near him; and only since beginning this chapter, I have seen old Covertside, the steeplechase horse, led down the course at Harlow, to be mounted at the starting-post, with his hood turned right over his head to blindfold him. Many a horse cannot, or will not, race until he has "put himself outside" a good dose of whiskey; and I think it was Sea Song, winner of many short races, who always endeavoured to lay down on the man saddling him for a race. Truly, horses are curious in their temperaments, and the man to succeed with them must not only be

interested in the work, but should possess untiring patience and aptitude for studying their peculiarities. Possessed of that patience, there are very few equine puzzles to which you cannot discover the key.

Entire horses are, of course, the most "cranky" and self-willed; though out of a fairish number I have ridden, I must say that they have given me very little trouble. The worst was a great, handsome horse, bought in France, which had had matters all his own way for three months or so before he came into my hands. He was "purely cussed," and showed vice and temper for absolutely nothing but the pleasure of getting his own way. Naturally, the very first time I rode him we had to fight it out. No compromise was possible, and an exceedingly warm twenty minutes ensued, but he was a very nice horse afterwards. Mr. Chaplin's Broomielaw was an awful brute, and would come at any one open-mouthed like a savage dog. He was occasionally so bad that a cloth had to be thrown over his head before his jockey could

mount, and he would buck, rear, and kick like a mad horse with no provocation whatever. I once saw "Speedy" Payne—an "erratic" himself—riding a wretch called Cranberry, belonging to Tom Stevens of Chilton, at Croydon. They ran the horse in his quarter-sheet, in order to delude him into the idea that he was only at exercise. He jumped off with the rest of the field, and won in a canter by half-a-dozen lengths. And who amongst race-goers does not remember the eccentric Peter—one of the best horses of the century—stopping to kick in the middle of a race at Ascot, and then winning! It has often been truly said that we only make horses subservient to man by deceiving them, and keeping from them the knowledge of their own strength. I think that Peter very nearly discovered the secret!

Horses that are troublesome, either to ride or in the stable, may be roughly divided into two classes—the erratic and the wicked; and between these two there is a great gulf fixed. It is generally true to say that

no horse is naturally bad-tempered; but the exception only goes, we know, to prove the rule. I bought a three-year-old out of a racing stable: she was as quiet in and out of the stable as could be wished; but soon she developed the most ferocious temper in the stable, though perfectly quiet, still, when out of it. Her final performance was half killing me one Sunday morning in her box. After that we parted company. Now, no one could have teased her, as she was looked after by an even-tempered man who had been with me for many years; and during the twelve months I had her no one ever got on her back but myself. The only way I can account for the change in her is the fact that her sire, Rosicrucian, was a great savage, and I suppose the family failing came out with increasing age.

"Squire" Drake of Shardeloes owned a wonderful horse in Quits, who took a number of Hunters' races on the flat, but could never be induced to jump at all. Time after time great efforts were made to fit him for taking part in steeplechase work, but no power on earth could

make him face a fence; surely a freak of temper this, for no physical inability to jump could ever be detected in him. Equally curious is it to see, on the other hand, a horse turned out in a meadow, disporting himself backwards and forwards over the same fence, apparently for the sake of amusement! Some years back I had one that, to my knowledge, had never done any jumping in his life until he attained the age of sixteen, when I rode him over one or two "made" fences. He jumped *at* them, though he did not quite clear them, as boldly as a lion, and I then rode him a few times with hounds. He pulled fearfully, and got so excited as to almost merit the description of a mad horse, but would never refuse anything. Sad to say, however, he one day, going at a post and rails, took off yards in front, and smashed the whole lot, leaving a clean breach through which one might have driven a good-sized cart, and this lamed him badly.

A hunter belonging to a friend of mine always declined to touch the gruel brought

him after a day with hounds; but if the pail was left just outside the door of his box, he would always come out and *steal it!* Perhaps it was fortunate this animal had hoofs instead of hands, otherwise he might have given trouble in a respectably-conducted stable!

One of the most eccentric horses and cleverest hunters I ever owned—and it mattered not what country you set him down in, he was equally good in them all—was a weight-carrying, flea-bitten grey, Grey Billy. For some years he had been carrying George Champion, then huntsman to the Southdown Foxhounds, and afterwards for two seasons of the Goodwood. He would holloa and almost kick the place down if hounds came anywhere within hearing of him in his stable. I have never seen a horse so keen on hunting before or since.

Of Billy it might be truly said that he had forgotten as much as most horses knew. During the two seasons I rode him, my bodily weight was under eight stone, whilst the horse could carry eighteen to twenty

stone with comfort. He was an Irishman, and I never came across such a sporting bit of stuff in my life. He *would* hunt, whether his rider was a good man or no. On one occasion, I remember that we ran into a big wood, with the Crawley and Horsham Foxhounds. I could hear George Loader give a holloa every now and then; sometimes it sounded to the right of me, sometimes to the left. Billy was listening intently, and just at the moment that I had made up my mind to push through the dense underwood right-handed, he had come to the conclusion that the holloa was from the left. I tried my utmost to get the old horse to go my way, but he mildly, though firmly, refused. Billy was an old hand at the game, and I, at the time, a young one. The horse got his own way, of course, crashed through the wood left-handed, and soon proved how correct his ear had been by bringing me into the midst of the fun again.

The way the old fellow opened the latch of a gate with his nose and lips was very

funny. Every time he jumped a stile, or post and rails, his feet seemed to hit the timber all round with an unholy rattling, but I never knew him make the least mistake. He could fly or creep equally well, but—there is always a "but"—poor old Billy was as slow as a top. His best pace was about as fast as a man could kick his hat.

Later in life, when Billy had passed into the hands of a man who hunted solely for the sake of showing off his inimitable "get-up" at covert-side, and "gassing" about his exploits to his lady friends afterwards, I met him in the field, "owner up." Hounds had just got away, and over a terrific obstacle, nearly two feet high, his gallant master had led on the old grey. We ran fast down a lightly ploughed field, through a gateway, into a small coppice beyond. At the far side of this ran a brook: it was not more than ten or twelve feet wide, and both take-off and landing were equally sound. Immediately Billy's pilot saw it, however, he was for pulling up. He little knew William's

sporting tastes. "Pull up!" thought the veteran. "What! with a start like this, and hounds running? What do *you* think?" and snatching hold of his bit, the game old fellow went for the brook, like the lion that he was. Over he flew with the greatest ease. Up went his rider in the air; for one moment the horse's head was between the man's legs, and the next, this "arm-chair and mahogany" sportsman cut a voluntary, and landed, with a great "kerchuuk!" on the middle of his back.

After this Billy cleverly eluded his pursuers, and enjoyed—I am quite certain he immensely enjoyed—the rest of the run on his own account.

# ON CONDITIONING HUNTERS

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THERE can be little doubt that however much sportsmen may deplore the passing away of "the good old days," for most reasons, that the modern system of getting our hunters fit to go is infinitely preferable to that adopted by our forefathers. The "summer at grass" system now finds hardly any followers; and though I think that a short period of turning out, say in April or the early part of May, does a horse a great deal of good in cooling his blood—and grass is far preferable to physic when obtainable in this manner as an alterative—yet if the run at grass be continued until the weather waxes warm, horses get worried to death with flies, stamp their feet to pieces on adamantine turf, and probably become weakened from want of corn; unless, indeed, they are regularly fed each day, in

addition to getting what they can forage for themselves. In a former book, published some years ago, I wrote: "A roomy loose-box, well ventilated and clean, with perhaps a couple of hours' run in the day in a paddock, and about two feeds of corn, is the way to summer hunters." I am, I hope, wiser now, and instead of running them out by day, I say turn them into the paddock *each night* during the hot weather, for at night the midges cease from troubling, and the horse-flies are at rest. In addition to this, the heavy dews of morning and evening are most beneficial to the feet, especially if they are at all inclined to get heated or feverish.

There seems to be a practice now growing up of summering hunters in large loose-boxes, laid with tan or peat-moss, and giving them no exercise or chance of exercising themselves for from three to four months; in fact, they never come out of their boxes at all during that period. I confess I fail to see the advantage of this system. Surely it is an unnatural life for a horse to lead; his muscles must all

get slack for want of use, and be the box ever so well ventilated, that circumstance cannot compensate for the daily experience—if only for an hour—of open-air exercise. The best of all exercise is that obtainable when the animal finds himself in a state of nature, free and unfettered to roam about wherever he pleases; and this is provided for by the nightly run out on the dewy grass. Should this be found unattainable or inconvenient, then a horse should at least be walked for an hour, or perhaps a little less, each day.

Unless wanted early for the cubbing, September 1st will be found quite soon enough to commence with a horse which has been regularly corn-fed throughout the summer. Probably it will be found best to discontinue all green food about the middle of August—up to that time they should have it, with carrots or other suitable roots—given them with no niggardly hand. A good beginning would be to give a couple of hours a day walking exercise only for the first week; after which the work should be added to by some slow

canters, not exceeding half a mile at first, and then gradually lengthening. Long trotting also, on some soft ground where obtainable, will be found beneficial. Even when a horse is almost fit, he should never be allowed to travel at his highest rate of speed: horses are always at their best when running a bit above themselves. I don't believe in the system which sends them out, either to hunt or take part in a steeplechase, when, although full of muscle, they have lost the bloom of health, possess a lack-lustre eye, and want to carry their heads between their forelegs when led along. The "hunted-to-death" looking horse is never the horse at his best; at least, that has been my experience, both on race-course and at covert side.

In furtherance of this idea, it is as well not to have hunters quite "cherry-ripe" at the beginning of the season. Of course I don't mean that they should not be fit to go. What I wish to convey is, that they should not be "fine drawn" in November. You can get plenty of condition on a horse

without making him look like a greyhound. The season, as it progresses, will do that for you only too effectively; and if you make him into a greyhound to start hunting with, he will be fit to take a header through a keyhole before Christmas! Speaking of this reminds me of a little scene on Newmarket Heath. Poor old George Fordham was gazing at the weedy-looking Discord, just as he had been saddled for a race—the Biennial, I think it was. "He'd make a beautiful greyhound if you could get him to swallow a conger-eel, wouldn't he?" said the jockey contemplatively.

The time required for getting a hunter fit to go is more or less an unknown quantity, for the very simple reason that one never finds two horses exactly alike in constitution. Some get fit on so much less work than others; one usually notices also, that a free sweater will come to hand much more readily than one with a slow-acting skin. But speaking broadly, most horses will "gallop on" after a couple of months' preparation.

Hitherto I have only been dealing with made hunters, those that have already learnt their business, and require no jumping practice. Now let us turn our attention for a few minutes to the novice, or the horse which, were he a human criminal, would be facetiously described upon the judge's calendar as "Imperfectly educated." Very much the same beginning as that previously recommended in the case of training horses for hurdle-jumping will be found efficacious: the low pole, bushed up with good, strong prickly stuff—gorse is the best—which will make the learner rise well, and not allow him to "slop" over his fences: half the battle is in getting a young one to jump "up," and jump "clean." Much may, and ought to, be done at a very early stage of the young hunter's life—say when he is two and three years old—by turning him into a field where he has to jump a fair-sized ditch, and if possible a low hedge or a bank, in order to get to his water-trough, or to a certain spot where you may be accustomed to place a few carrots, or

some other equally well-appreciated delicacy. At the present time I have a two-year-old and a three-year-old, own sisters, turned out in two of my fields, which have become such accomplished jumpers through these means that, "hoist with my own petard," I can't keep them into any field on the place! I don't fancy *they* will take much instructing in their business when the time comes for first riding them over fences.

But assuming that a young horse—a four- or five-year-old—which has not had the inestimable benefit of such early training, comes into our hands, then in most cases it becomes merely a question of time and patience with him—and we cannot give too much of the latter—in order to get him to jump kindly. I say "jump kindly" advisedly, for assuredly the horse that jumps unkindly is not, and probably never will be, a good hunter. When teaching, we should carefully conceal the fact that we are giving a lesson: there is nothing a horse hates so much as the thought that he is receiving one. Always let him think he is

jumping because he wishes it, not we. If possible, take him over small grips, through gaps, and over low places in a hedge. Never keep on for long at the same obstacle; never jump out of a field at the same place where you jumped into it, unless some considerable time has elapsed between the two performances. Lunging over some low rails *which will not give* is also a good plan, but open to the objection that your learner will probably at once suspect you of giving him a lesson.

Many an animal which has developed into a magnificent fencer, has made a most unpromising beginning—included in that category being such celebrities as Congress, who had to be dragged over small obstacles by men with cart ropes; Emblem and Emblematic, both destined to take the highest honours at Liverpool, and who, for a long time, refused to jump even a grip; and Midshipmite, who came to very frequent grief on the schooling ground before becoming one of the finest jumpers of the century. For the beginner in cross-country work, the sight of a pack of

harriers in front of him is the best inducement in the world to make him take an interest in his business. Horses usually love to see where hounds are going; and to quote Whyte-Melville, "this is why the hunting-field is such a good school for leaping. Horses . . . are prompted by some unaccountable impulse to follow a pack of hounds, and the beginner finds himself voluntarily performing feats of activity and daring in accordance with the will of his rider, which no coercion from the latter would induce him to attempt. Flushed with success, and, if fortunate enough to escape a fall, confident in his lately discovered powers, he finds a new pleasure in their exercise, and, most precious of qualities in a hunter, grows 'fond of jumping.'"

Jumping schools like those of Mr. Arthur Yates, at Bishop's Sutton, and Captain Machell, at Kennett, are most useful for teaching a horse to jump; but such places are, of course, not attainable, nor are they, indeed, at all necessary, to the average man who is schooling a young hunter. Much depends

upon the brain power possessed by the pupil. I have been on some half-dozen or so young ones, which ten minutes' experience convinced me were little better than congenital idiots; to persevere with such as these is sheer waste of valuable time, for no class of horse (not even excepting steeplechasers) require so much natural cleverness as hunters. To watch a smart hunter getting out of all sorts of the unexpected difficulties which are pretty sure to fall to his lot in the course of a season, is one of the most interesting sights I know of.

Falls have the most curious and contradictory effects on different horses. We often see the careless, slovenly jumper vastly improved, and occasionally made into a really smart performer, by getting "rapped over the knuckles" with stiff timber that he has been trying to take liberties with. On the other hand, I can call to mind at least a dozen cases where a fall has caused a horse to lose heart and courage, and—for the time at least—become a persistent refuser. Dick Christian said, "If a young horse gets a very bad fall, it

frightens him. A couple of falls with low fences are well enough, *but not if you hurt him.*" Perhaps the whole secret lies in creating, and afterwards developing, to the best of our power, that *confidence* without which no horse living will jump well or safely. When a hunter is thoroughly confident of his own powers, it is astonishing to see the way in which he can discriminate, at a glance, the obstacle which he must jump cleanly from the one which will safely bear playing with. I well remember old Kilballysmash (not a name calculated to inspire a strange rider with confidence!), a very safe steeplechase horse and hunter, which was regularly ridden by Major Porteous with the Royal Artillery Drag, was as clever as a cartload of monkeys at this game, and whilst cleanly jumping new and strong timber, would casually gallop straight through that which was old and rotten. I only saw the old chap try that trick once too often, and that was at Sandown, where he tried to gallop through the fence down the hill, and it was most ludicrous to witness his astonishment

when the obstacle "rose up and hit him." I think that to the genuine horse-lover few things in the world (after hunting) can be of more interest than the conditioning and schooling of our equine friends.

# IN THE OFF-SEASON

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THERE are some very real, if subsidiary, pleasures always reserved for the average hunting man at a time of year when the exigencies of the season forbid his indulgence in the pleasures of the chase, and amongst them may certainly be reckoned the acquisition of hunters for the next campaign. An amusing volume might be written of the various ways in which we often become possessed of horses—good, bad, and indifferent—which we afterwards turn, or try to turn, to good account in the hunting-field. The man whose establishment is large enough to permit of his buying several young animals, and then, according to how they shape, either hunting them or promptly relegating them to the shafts, is always an individual to be envied.

A friend of mine, an amateur farmer, always buys from four to six young Irish horses, mostly four-year-olds, each autumn, gets them fit to go, and then it depends on themselves whether one sees them sailing along in the wake of the hounds, or officiating in a plough team. Perhaps, after a summer's work on the farm, they are given a second trial over a country; if again unsuccessful, they either go back to the calm and retirement of agricultural pursuits, or up to the hammer. As my friend is never in a hurry to sell, always having work of some kind or other for horses to do, he rarely loses much money over his "bad bargains." It is the unfortunate who only has three or four stalls who suffers most when he has bought a "wrong un." He must have, say, three hunters; he has, therefore, no room for a bad horse, and must sell at once, which means, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, a material loss; therefore, it becomes with him a matter of real importance as to whether he has acquired a performer or a fraud.

The long purse is, we know, the key to most of the good things in this life, and, provided a man can "stand the racket," not much difficulty need be experienced in getting suitable horses; well-known performers are sent up, for various reasons, to Tattersall's and Aldridge's, and one can follow them there; dealers there are in plenty who will give a fair trial over fences, both in the vicinity of London ("half-an-hour from the Marble Arch," if we are to put implicit faith in the advertisement columns of the "dailies") and across a natural country, a little further away from the great metropolis. But we must not go there thinking of forty and fifty pounders, you know! Assuming, however, that we have backed the winner of the Cesarewitch, or that our great-aunt has just bequeathed us a hundred or two, and in leaving this "vale" has thus enabled us to mount ourselves in another, *e.g.*, that of Aylesbury, to wit; well, then, there is no pleasanter way of spending a crisp, bright October afternoon than chartering a smart hansom at the

Marble Arch and traversing the Edgware Road in the direction of Mr. Nemo's neat little establishment, where "over thirty horses always fit to go" may be inspected, ridden, and "larked."

Since the time of Soapy Sponge and Mr. Benjamin Buckram these places have undergone vast changes, all, I am delighted to say, for the better. There is, as a general rule, no need for a secret code of signals 'twixt master and man relating to the removal of bandages and swabs, the "stirring up" of "wrong 'uns," and turning round in the stalls of crib-biters, so as to hide their crimes committed on the mangers. Of course, there are still plenty of places where these and other little and big deceptions are daily practised; but for the purposes of this chapter we will treat only of the fairly "straight" establishments.

We ring the small brass-handled bell at the "office," and are at once admitted into a room about the size of the interior of a brougham. The walls record, not "in storied urn," but in

sporting prints, the gallant deeds of many a well-known pack:

> "Not a square inch of the wall is bare,
> Herrings and Alkens, all are there;"

whilst facing us, as we enter, is a steeplechasing print, in which a horse is apparently chasing his dismounted jockey, open-mouthed, across ridge and furrow. There are also two old coaching pictures, more gaudy than artistic, flanking a realistic, if apocryphal, contest between "bold Bendigo" and a certain gigantic nig—beg pardon! coloured gentleman. "Rouge et Noir" might be selected as a suitable title for this: it seems all blood and black man!

Mr. Nemo, the proprietor, takes off his hat —an article of attire in which I firmly believe he goes to bed every night—and we duly inform him of the fact that we shall be willing to part with a certain, or uncertain, amount of earthly dross if he can supply us with a horse that can gallop and jump a bit, and is decently temperate with hounds. And here I momentarily pause, and in the words of the immortal Jorrocks say, "Oh, my beloved 'earers," where,

oh where *is* the pleasure of riding one that is not temperate?

> "In the days of my youth, Father William then said,
> On pullers I thrust and I rammed,
> But now I've so frequently pitched on my head,
> That I'll see the whole lot of them——"

sold off at Tattersall's without reserve rather than ride such brutes. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and the hard-pulling tear-away goeth where *he* listeth, and the only "list" *we* get in the matter is probably one "to starboard" as we vainly try to check his mad career. And then again, think of the brute that *will* rear at every hand-gate, and also when you have to wait your turn at the only possible place in a fence!

But I am losing sight of the main object of the visit this afternoon to Mr. Nemo's excellently conducted stables, and will hark back again. Pulling another bell as he leaves the "office" —this time one with a long iron handle, and which gives out a somewhat dolorous sound down at the far end of the building — you walk across the freshly gravelled yard (*Mem.*

—To find out where horse-dealers get that very bright red gravel that one always sees. Wonder if it is specially grown for them?) and are met at the nearest stable door by a neatly gaitered groom in a white linen jacket, and duly introduced to a big-boned bay horse standing in the first stall.

"Now there, sir, is a horse that's done a bit of work: seasoned hunter" (*Mem.*—Too many season'd hunter; got a tooth about a foot long). "I could take a little money for him, too——" But Mr. Nemo seeing you shaking your head, whilst one eye rests on a peculiarly doubtful-looking hock, he passes on, with the remark that perhaps you wanted something a bit better class than the bay?

You say you think you do.

You pass in turn a weight-carrying grey, a weedy chestnut with white heels and an evil eye, a sleepy-looking black, which was probably only debarred from the second-hand funeral trade through lacking the necessary turn of speed for the business, and a piebald. Then the worthy dealer

throws open the door of a loose-box, and addressing his satellite, says—

"Tom, just strip this horse. Rufus, I call him, sir. By Lord Gough, dam by Victor. Irish horse, of course."

"But," you mildly object, "didn't Victor die ever so many years——"

"Oh, *that* Victor, oh yes; this is by the other Victor, you know."

You didn't know, but let it pass. After all, you had come to buy a horse, not a pedigree.

When divested of his clothing Rufus was certainly a taking horse, and filled the eye as a hunter all over.

"Now that's a horse you'd like," says Mr. Nemo, with just the least possible inflection in his voice as he pronounces the word "you." You take it as an implied compliment to your horsemanship. No man resists *that*. I know two men who refused Peerages, and one who declined the Lord Chancellorship, but I never yet met the human being that wouldn't swallow a compliment paid to his horsemanship.

You begin to think that Mr. Nemo is a man of considerable discernment.

"Let's have a saddle on him, Mr. Nemo."

"Certainly, sir. P'raps you'd just like to step inside the office while we're waiting, for the wind's chilly, although it's a pleasant day in the sun."

Adjourned to the brougham interior once more, we find that "just one" of some curious old brown sherry would be grateful and comforting. An extra good Laranaga also lends its fragrant and soothing influence to the moment, and when, some five minutes later, you issue forth from the tiny portal, drawing on your dogskins, you almost feel ashamed of the boyish eagerness that comes stealing over you to get on the gay chestnut's back and have a few minutes amongst the fences with him. However, you sternly repress the puerile feeling, assume a more or less uninterested demeanour, and stroll casually up to the good horse as he stands, a very model of strength without lumber, clean of limb and shapely of top.

Tom is already mounted (somewhat to your disappointment, you confess, as it postpones your own promised enjoyment for a brief space of time), and turning to you, Mr. Nemo says—

"You'd like to see how he moves, sir? We'll just walk through this gate. Tom, take him into the lower paddock."

And as the chestnut, who carries a beautiful coat in spite of the time of year, moves lightly off down the yard, you pass through a very white painted gate, and find yourself in a smooth-turfed enclosure of some three or four acres, erected on which are obstacles of almost every description under the sun—swinging gates, gorsed hurdles, here a bank, there a ditch, and a little further down a somewhat sharply cut, shallow (you know it is shallow because you put your stick into it whilst Mr. Nemo was looking the other way!) brook, the water for which was supplied by means of a big garden hose. In obedience to a wave of the dealer's hat Tom now puts the horse into a slow canter, and you watch

him as with smooth, powerful action, and with his hocks well under him, he tops the hurdles, just brushing the gorse at the top with his hind legs, then jumps the gate without the semblance of hesitancy, and gallops down to the so-called brook. As he nears it his ears go a point more forward, and unless your eyes deceive you he hangs fire momentarily. A sharp job of Tom's spur converts doubt—if there was a doubt—into resolution, and again the good chestnut acquits himself well. Tom then pulls up, and, patting the arched neck, brings his gallant steed up to where you await him—not forgetting to stand him with his legs well stretched out, in what the ladies call "a becoming attitude."

"Now, sir, p'raps you'd just like to lay a leg over him yourself. I know you're a gentleman" (charming little emphasis on the "you" again) "that *can* put 'em over a country, and that being so, why, you naturally like to see what they're made of for yourself." This man is really charming. Sees at a glance, you know, whether a fellow's

a horseman or not. Couldn't wrangle with a chap like this about a beastly tenner or so.

Once on top of Rufus, any doubt which you might hitherto have felt as to his being a hunter very quickly disappears; and as he hoists you over the gate you feel the immense hind leverage, and murmur delightedly to yourself, "This horse ought to lift one smack over a town."

Just one turn over the water, you think, as you set him going again, and after that I must really buy—here, hi, halloa! what the deuce is this? Rufus has most distinctly "chucked it" the second time of asking, at the brook, and then you remember the momentary hesitation and Tom's spur when he went over before. But this won't do at any price. Back you go, give him a fair run, and this time, despite a slight inclination to "go in the breeching," and a somewhat awkward throwing up of the head in the air, you are over the "puddle," and safely on the far side. Your keenness for the horse has been a little blunted, and you feel that he

must redeem his character before you resign him, so after sweeping smoothly over the gorsed hurdles again, you take him well by the head, and put him at a slightly higher gate than the one he has already negotiated. Again he fails you not. Clearly this horse is good at timber. One must pass over that objection to cold water. After all, we share the idiosyncrasy ourselves—unless it is labelled "for outward application only." He moves like a workman, too; not *quite* such a pleasant hack, perhaps, as he looked when ridden by the crafty Tom. He shakes one about rather, from the very fact of his great hind leverage. Well, we can't go to Birmingham and get horses made for us, neither can we be measured for the exact thing that suits. We will just see what Nemo is asking for him.

But Mr. Nemo is much too good a man of business to let a customer stand and cool down under the shivering influence of "chill October's" raw and nipping breezes. You have only got as far as "Well, Mr. Nemo,

and what are you asking for——," when the dealer says—

"Let's step inside, sir. There's a fire there, and I'm sure you won't be wanting to catch cold just as the season's beginning."

You again "step inside," and it cannot be denied that the warmth of the fire—well, then, it must only be just half a glass more, Mr. Nemo—and a fresh cigar, for your last one was jerked out of your mouth when Rufus declined the water, exercise a certain genial influence over your mind, and causes you, perhaps, to look upon the depleting of your balance at the bank with rather more indifference than would have been the case had you been shivering out in the middle of the paddock. Besides, there's that legacy, you know. Wouldn't Aunt Tabitha turn in her grave if she only knew how you were going to spend it!

"He's worth a hundred and eighty of anybody's money, sir, that horse is. A good horse, a sound horse, and one that will carry a bit of weight. Not that that's of any use

to *you*, sir, I know," he hastens to add, and you feel that you are glad he *did* say this. Not that you are at all tetchy on the subject of your weight; but still, knowing you have gone up a bit lately (merely temporarily, you know), you don't want people to imagine you are really getting heavy; it's too ridiculous.

"—— And so to *you*, sir, I would say one hundred and seventy — guineas," he adds, evidently judging from the expression of your face that, like the Bard of Avon (not the second in the Cesarewitch, by the way), you might think "parting such sweet sorrow."

A little further conversation; another adjournment to Rufus's box, where you find him contentedly munching a lock of sweet hay; Tom's aid requisitioned to remove the blue flannel bandages from his legs, and permit you to run your hands down them; a return to the office, and then the deal is clinched by Mr. Nemo's remark—

"I should like to see you with that horse, sir, I should indeed, and I'll tell you for why.

He's a good horse, and a generous horse, *but* he's a *horseman's* horse, and it ain't *everybody* who could ride that horse as he should be ridden. *That's* why I want *you* to buy him, sir. Now, do you see?"

See! how could any one help seeing? Extraordinary thing it is how quick some of these people are. This one always had a very high order of intelligence, I am sure. As I said before, one can't higgle with a man like that. You pull out your cheque-book, and after a feeble, "Think you ought to say pounds, you know," fill it up for one hundred and seventy guineas, give directions for the transfer to your own stable of the new purchase, and drive back to town with the comforting reflection that you have got "a hunter."

On the following Monday you find yourself at Tatt's in consequence of an announcement in the *Field* that the stud of eight hunters —"well known with the Quorn and Mr. Fernie's"—belonging to Sir Outrun Constable, will be sold without reserve, the owner having

met with an accident. Which thing is a—well, euphemism, let us call it, for we know, as a fact, that nothing ails the sporting baronet except an impecuniosity which has now become chronic, and the utter obtuseness exhibited by Mr. Shadrach Mozeltoff when spoken to on the somewhat ticklish subject of "renewals." Under these circumstances he has sent his horses up to Albert Gate, and transported himself from our inclement shores and a set of grasping creditors, to the balmy air and orange groves of the sunny Mediterranean. Out of the stud in question there is one grand hunter that we covet, a grey. Constable, we know, paid (or owed) close upon three hundred for it last season as a five-year-old. We think we will have just one bid for Shamrock. Confound it! here's that idiot Stubbins, who has always said how much he should like to buy the horse. Wonder if we could manage to put him off it?

"How are you, Stubbins. Come up to buy anything?"

"Well, there are one or two in Constable's lot that I shouldn't mind getting—at a price, you know. They've most of them been galloped almost off their legs; especially the grey, you know."

That decides you. This fellow is trying to put *you* off buying Shamrock. You vow within your wicked heart that Shamrock shall be yours. "Once on board the lugger" —or rather, to descend from metaphor, once on the good grey's back, you will show the perfidious Stubbins the way along, and revenge yourself sweetly on him for playing you that dirty trick—which, by the way, when you come to think of it, you were just contemplating playing *him!*

Two hours later (how slowly they sell the horses preceding the one you want to buy) the crowd at the lower end of the yard parts to admit the passage of a rare good-looking, dark grey horse. What a "made 'un"! what grand shoulders; and watch how he picks up his feet and "goes all round" as he trots up to the rostrum, fully

conscious of the fact that he is the cynosure of all eyes. You feel your own sparkle—at least, you think you do—as you look him over from the tips of his pricked ears to the one white heel behind.

"Lot 74. Grey gelding, Shamrock, good hunter and brilliant fencer. What may I say for Shamrock? Will any one put him in at a hundred just to start with? He's worth three or four times that money, gentlemen. Well then, ninety? Thank you, sir; ninety guineas is bid. Ninety — ninety guineas—one, two, five, a hundred; a hundred in two places—and five, thank you. One hundred and five guineas is bid for Shamrock. A horse like this must be worth a great deal more than that money, &c."

Now, all this time you could see that villain Stubbins nodding with an air of determination which quite shocked you after his unblushing statement before the sale anent the horse's legs. You get nettled, and seeing all other opposition has about died out, you determine to "sit upon" your

friend, so trying to appear cool, you say, "a hundred and twenty."

Stubbins evidently doesn't like being "raised" that way. He casts a glance of envy at the horse, reserving the "hatred and malice" part of it for you. Then with a defiant gulp he cries out—

"A hundred and thirty."

"Forty," and you look your enemy coolly in the face as you say it.

That settles him. He walks away, evidently longing for your blood. After all, it is a cheap horse; true, you haven't had the opportunity of "laying a leg" across him, but if you had bought him in any other way, perhaps you would have had to pay an extra fifty for the privilege. Besides which, you have enjoyed the satisfaction of "scoring off" Stubbins, and that's really dirt cheap at a tenner or so!

Both of these ways are pleasant ones for getting hold of the "materials of war," and another is to buy well-known performers in the field; but then, of course, you must be prepared to go, on occasions, to four or

five hundred for something very good. I rode one one day in Northamptonshire, which made over five hundred at the hammer a fortnight later, and he was an aged horse, too; and another, which Lord Clarendon had paid six hundred for, some time before; and although I think the man to whom money is but a small object does wisely to give these big prices for horses that really suit him—why shouldn't he?—yet there is no doubt that one can be carried right well, if a light-weight, by horses that make very little more than the odd shillings on those costly purchases just named. A friend of mine a short time since bought for forty sovereigns a rare made horse, up to weight, and a grand performer; he afterwards won a good steeplechase with him. I picked up a very useful hunter at Aldridge's not long ago for twenty-seven pounds, which carried me two seasons without a fall, and was wonderfully fast; another that I bought, a perfectly sound five-year-old, without a character of any sort, for twenty pounds, made me a capital light-

weight hunter for five years—though I own to her having given me fourteen falls the first season; the best timber-jumper I ever rode I bought for thirty; and I remember Captain Simpson, R.A., picking up a mare (as a four-year-old) at Tattersall's for twenty guineas, on which I have seen him successful in three or four Point to Point races, and she was also an extraordinarily good hunter. In this case, however, she owed all her education to her buyer's bold and clever handling. One has only to pause and think a bit to be able to give a score or more of such cases occurring within one's own experience. One I bought out of a London hansom; another that had been running in a 'bus; both turned out good hunters, though the "cabman" was awfully hot with hounds.

At a somewhat early period of my life I was possessed by what I can only now call an unaccountable craze for hunting thoroughbred weeds. In fact, I never felt so happy as when I had acquired some shadowy-looking wretch out of a selling race or training stable, with a

pedigree as long as its own tail. It never seemed to dawn upon my benighted understanding that a little elementary jumping practice might not be entirely thrown away on the brutes. No, I would buy one of these three- or four-year-old "spectres" one day and hunt it the next. The number of falls they gave me was simply extraordinary; but then at twenty one never gets hurt, somehow, and most assuredly I never seemed to learn wisdom from my frequent acquaintance with Mother Earth. No sooner had one of the "rips" got some idea of jumping a country into its head than it would probably be sold to make room for "another of the same," which had caught my fancy, perhaps, at some race-meeting, and then the tumbling-about process would all begin again *de novo*. Most of the brutes whose prices came within my modest means had ewe-necks and no shoulders; they were almost without exception hard pullers, and yet wouldn't face a curb-bridle. All this made the business fairly exciting when galloping down hill, as may well be imagined.

To buy of the farmer over whose land we hunt is a thing we should all do, where feasible; but in many countries it is next door to impossible, however much we may wish it. In such deals I have always been lucky enough to get very good value for my money, and notably so on one occasion, when a curious-looking, wizened-up old fellow, riding a niceish young bay, addressed me at covert-side thus—

"Morning, sir. Want to buy a good young hunter, now?"

"Well, I don't know. How old is he?"

"Comin' four. Bred 'un myself. I live over at yon farm there," nodding his head in the direction of a small homestead at the end of the field we were then in.

"How much do you want?"

"Sha'n't say till you've seen 'un, and got on 'un," was the somewhat unexpected reply.

I glanced over the young one, and certainly he looked a hunter in embryo.

"I'll come to-morrow at eleven," I said.

The old chap merely nodded, and then moved off.

Next day I got to the tryst punctually, met my eccentric friend, and we walked together into a somewhat ill-kept stable to inspect the horse. Here, he did not show to advantage.

"Garge!" roared the old man, "saddle 'un and bring 'un aout."

When the colt stepped jauntily across the threshold, my liking for him revived; but if I liked him then, what were my feelings when I got on his back? He was a perfect mover, and as I took him round the field at the back of the farm, I felt I was on a real good one. I brought him back to where his owner and "Garge" stood, deep in conference.

"Take and put 'un over they hurdles there."

We cantered up to a flight of hurdles, and the young 'un popped over them like a sparrow. I could not conceal my delight. He was a performer.

"How much?" I said.

"Now look 'ere, young man," began the farmer, in severe tones, one hand rattling the coppers in his breeches pocket, whilst the

other, with forefinger upraised, appeared to menace me; "that's a good 'un, that is, and if you doan't like my price, it's not a bit o' use for you to try to higgle wi' *me*. I wants thirty-five sovereigns for he, and I doan't take not a penny less; so now take it, or leave it."

"You want *what?*" I gasped, for this was an animal well worth seventy or eighty.

"Thirty-five pounds, and not a penny less."

I said nothing. All I did was to climb off that horse, take the excellent agriculturist by the arm and lead him into his own house. Instinct told me where he kept the pens and ink, and I never wrote out a cheque in such a hurry in my life! The young 'un turned out one of the best hunters kind Fate has ever thrown in my way.

Only a short time since, a friend was reminding me of my early *penchant* for the non-jumping, weedy thoroughbred.

"Ah," I said, "I'm a bit older now, and have got over acting like a fool."

"Oh, I really don't see much change in you, old fellow," he answered.

And to this moment I can't quite make out in what light he meant that remark to be taken.

THE END